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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 351. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 21ST, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

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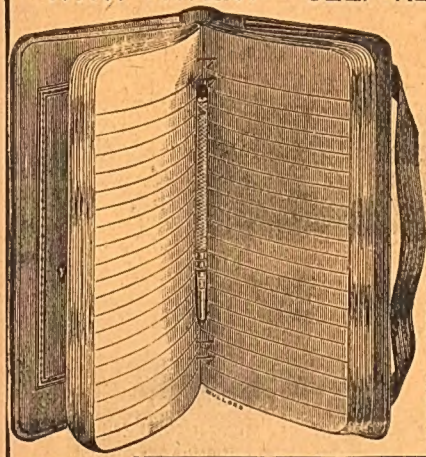

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SHORT STORIES

No. 351.] [ONE PENNY.

EDITED BY

C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

For the Week ending Sept. 21st, 1895.

Danforth's Dilemma.

MR. HOWARD DANFORTH, alias John Detch, alias Mortimer Ritter, alias H. L. Davis—by which last name he was now registered in the office below—this gentleman of many appellations sat in his room on the third floor, before a roaring fire, toasting his shins and cogitating on his fortunes.

Looked at in one light, these were at the very ebb. If payment had been demanded he could not have found the money for the fire before which he was comforting himself, much less for the delectable dinner he had eaten some hours before. But payment was not demanded. Being a specious gentleman of good address, with a fine, open countenance and a large and stylish portmanteau, he was welcomed to the privileges of the accommodating hostelry without question.

Besides this outward show, which was always a large part of his stock-in-trade, his entire capital consisted of two shillings, a lucky farthing he kept to toss with, and an unlimited amount of nerve. Upon this latter Mr. Danforth relied, both to take him through certain tight places, and to replenish his funds when that became absolutely necessary. It had become necessary now, and he was only waiting until the proper time to take prompt and effective action.

The goddess Fortune, his only acknowledged mistress, had placed in his hands the opportunity for the replenishment of his purse. That opportunity took the shape of a bridal couple who had arrived that morning with an atmosphere of love and three trunks.

The groom was a slight, pale young fellow, with a downy moustache; the bride, a willowy girl, so enveloped in furs that one could not see her face, but with a deliciously small ankle, and a charming turn of the wrist when holding up her skirts.

These things Mr. Danforth admired as became a man of taste, but most of all was his attention attracted by the sparkling earrings that twinkled from under her veil. He was an amateur in diamonds, and knew a good thing when he saw it as well as Grubb, the pawnbroker—who, by the way, could be counted on to discount those same diamonds if luck turned that way. An examination of the visitors' book, and a little casual conversation with the clerk, showed these young people to be Francis Drummond and wife, and that they were established in a suite of rooms on the third floor front.

And so Mr. Danforth sat and meditated on these things, and waited for the clock in the church tower round the corner to strike three, which was his hour for business. This rule of action was based on a great deal of practical investigation as to the precise time when people sleep soundest. As every keen observer knows, two o'clock in the morning is the hour when the world turns over for good reasons, three o'clock is the time when it is again sleeping soundly.

By way of preparation, Mr. Danforth carefully removed his pointed patent leather shoes. Then he opened his bag, and extracted therefrom a pair of heavy felt slippers, which fastened about the ankle with elastic. He also

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took out a silver-mounted revolver. It was not loaded, and was only intended to display to persons who happened to be wakeful, and who were disposed to express surprise at the presence of an unknown and unbidden guest.

In all his experience, which extended over some five years of fortune-hunting in two hemispheres, he had met with but one man who cared to look into the muzzle of the revolver and at the same time make a disturbance. This man had compelled Mr. Danforth to hit him between the eyes with his left, and "upper cut" him with his right, before the intruder's exit was undisputed. He now adjusted the slippers, placed the ornamental firearm in his right hand coat pocket, and resumed his attitude of shin toasting.

Half an hour later, when the clock struck three, he was at the door of the suite on the third floor front. How he got through the door it is not necessary to state, but to a man of his experience a lock or a bolt was as little binding as a spider's thread, and to give away the secret of unbolting a door from the outside would be a poor bit of policy. He found himself in a dressing-room. With a match that had neither splutter nor smell he lighted the gas. In the bedroom beyond a tiny night-light was burning, and he paused for an instant at the door to make sure of the regular breathing of the sleepers. Then he turned to the toilet-table which stood between the windows. It was overspread with a most elaborate and tempting display. There were silver-backed brushes of all sizes and kinds, mirrors, cut glass perfume bottles, knives and scissors, and dainty powder boxes.

Mr. Danforth looked at all these with a loving eye; he could appreciate fine things, even though they belonged to another. He even touched his cheek with perfume, and smoothed his hair a little, as he looked into the mirror. He was really a good-looking fellow.

But other matters pressed. Opening the top drawer he fumbled through it. There was a profusion of neckties, collars, and cuffs, underclothing and fine linen. There were also links for the cuffs, studs of fine gold, and pins of precious stones, but Mr. Danforth put them aside. He opened the next drawer. The linen was finer. It was fluffed and ribboned. There was a suspiciously large pile of handkerchiefs in one corner. He lifted them and disclosed a jewel box of soft leather. His eyes sparkled, and he snapped up the lid. The diamonds within sparkled back at him—two as prettily set stones as he had ever seen, in earrings; a brooch of diamonds and rubies; a splendid tortoiseshell comb topped with rare diamonds. Then there were some rings of various sorts, a pretty little pearl necklace, and a bracelet.

He selected a large silk handkerchief and wrapped the jewels in it carefully, making a neat bundle, which he put into his left hand coat pocket. He closed the box and replaced it. He even laid back the linen, and smoothed it into place, for he liked order. Then, having put things as he found them, something possessed him to go into the further room where the sleepers were.

He walked quickly to the door, and after listening a minute, entered. The nightlight cast a dull glow over the objects in the room. The light fell on the face of the sleeping woman, and warmed into a pleasing colour the hair that lay on the pillow. She was lying on her side, with her arm thrown out, and her lips just parted in the effort of respiration. Mr. Danforth went a step nearer. She turned a little, and the yellow ruffle of her gown fell away from her throat. He could see her face clearly. He stopped, grasped nervously at the bedpost, and put his hand to his eyes; then it went involuntarily to his left pocket.

He leant farther over and peered hard into the girl's face. His lips smiled, but there was no smile in his eyes. "Louise!" he muttered, and the room with the little dot of light faded away.

In its place he saw a long stretch of white beach with the waves coming in, lap, lap. He saw a white umbrella, and under it a girl sketching, while at her feet lay a man reading aloud from a magazine. Once he caught up her hand and kissed it. The face of the girl was the same that lay on the pillow, and the man was Howard Danforth.

He thought of a good many things that had happened that summer, and he thought of them a little sadly. Things turned out queerly, very queerly. If it had not been for—but he smiled grimly, and put the thought from him.

The room seemed to be getting very hot. Perhaps he was nervous; yet there were few things, no matter how startling, that could upset his coolness. But what was all that rumble from the street below, and what—— He raised his head and sniffed at the air. Just then a cry floated up to him from below, a boy's shrill voice, and it said—"Fire!"

He went into the outer room. It was hotter than the other, and his nostrils smarted. He jerked open the door and went into the hall. The smoke rolled heavily along it. What was to be done must be done quickly. Catching up a white gown of flannel from a chair, he bounded back into the sleeping-room. He laid his hot hand on the forehead of the man. The presence wakened him, and he sat up wonderingly.

"Get up," said Danforth. "The place is on fire! Don't stop to dress, but tell your wife to throw on this gown. Hurry!"

"What is it?" said the girl, startled suddenly into consciousness. "What is it, Frank? Who was that?"

But Mr. Danforth was already in the outer room. He stepped to the window and looked down. The street was full of men. He felt for a rope that hung coiled on a hook by the window.

"We will try the staircase first," he said, as the Drummonds joined him. The husband had hurriedly donned his trousers, and was struggling with his coat.

"Howard, is it you?" exclaimed Mrs. Drummond. "How did you come to be here? And can I take nothing?" she added despairingly, as they ran into the hall.

"Nothing," he replied, ignoring the first question. He recalled afterwards how beautiful she looked in her loose white gown, with her hair fluffed about, and fright in her eyes.

They went to the staircase. A cloud of black smoke and red flame charged up at them.

"There's a staircase at the other end of the hall," said Drummond; "perhaps we could go by that."

"No use," panted Danforth, and he pointed to the flame that was already licking the corner at the far end. "We'll have to go by the window of your room."

They got into the room and shut the door. Danforth began to uncoil the big rope. "It's not very dangerous, if the fire doesn't get here before we get away. You must go first, Mrs. Drummond. Better put something under your arms so that the rope won't cut you. So;" and

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he slipped the loop over her shoulder and drew it tight. "Now, if you are ready, get out on the sill and let yourself over. We'll hold you perfectly seeure, and it won't take a minute."

She hesitated for the shadow of a second. Her face grew white. Then she turned and kissed her husband, and stepped quickly upon the window-sill. She swung off, bumped against the wall, and cried out. The men lowered her rapidly, but for all that it seemed as if she would never reach the ground. It was getting hotter, and the little waves of smoke were oozing in by the door.

At last the rope slackened. They could see her lifted in the arms of the men, a white dot in the blackness. The rope swung free, and Danforth pulled it back with great jerks.

"No! No!" interposed Drummond. "I can slide down it. It will take too long to lower me, and you mustn't take any risks. Wait till I get my wife's jewels; I can save them." He made a dive for the drawer, and took out the jewel case, which he slipped into his pocket. The glass in the mirror cracked, and the flames peered in and lit up the room.

"Did you ever climb down a rope?" asked Danforth, as he looked at the young man's hands.

"No, but I can try. If I fall——" But the other cut him short, and flung the noose round his head, almost roughly.

"Now you're off," he urged, and the young fellow went over the sill. He was not heavy, but Danforth was out of training. His muscles strained, and his joints cracked as the rope paid out slowly. His eyes smarted, and once he had to take a hitch round the hook, and lean out for breath. Then he shut his eyes and lowered away, but his breath came fast and his head was dizzy.

Again the rope slackened. With a gasp Danforth sprang upon the sill and let himself over. He twisted his leg into the rope and swung off. He breathed more freely after he got away from the window, but the hemp grew hot under his hands, and he thought he must let go. But again his mind helped his muscles, and he still went down; down, past the second storey window, out of which the flames were darting; down, until he reached the arms that were reached up to him. There was a cheer from the sympathetic crowd that had gathered in the street.

Young Drummond caught him by the hand. "You have saved our lives," he said simply, "and I thank you. You are an old friend of my wife, I believe."

"Yes," put in Mrs. Drummond; "this is Mr. Danforth—and this is my husband, Mr. Francis Drummond; but how did you happen to come to us?"

Danforth rested for a moment to gain his senses.

"Easy enough to explain if one were to explain it," he said with an attempt at a laugh. "But you mustn't stand here. There's an hotel a little way round the corner; you had better go there. We can do no good for this place. It's done for. It isn't pleasant to lose one's clothes, but such things have to be borne."

Mrs. Drummond placed herself between the men, and took an arm of each. Thus they walked through the crowd of people, stopping now and then to look back at the burning building.

At the hotel steps Danforth paused. "I shall have to go back," he explained. "I have some things to look after. You had better go straight to bed. You can do nothing till morning. Then you can get another outfit. It's too bad—and a wedding journey, too!"

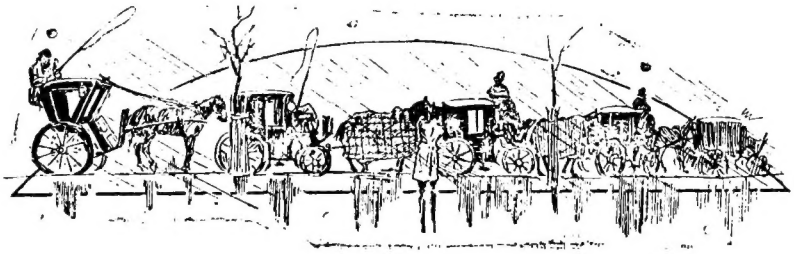
"But you will be here in the morning, will you not?" asked Drummond.

"Yes; we shall want to hear the whole story," said Mrs. Drummond. "Good-night," and she put out her hand. "I will thank you more in the morning," she added, as he touched it.

As they turned to go up the steps, Drummond felt a touch on his arm.

"I beg your pardon," said Danforth, handing him a small packet made up in a handkerchief; "I beg your pardon, but I think your wife must have forgotten her diamonds."

Then, before Drummond could speak, he turned and went back into the crowd. F. M. Smith.



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GOLDEN ✷ STAR.

- - A Romance - -

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

The prologue tells of the bridal of Vilcaroya and Golden Star, in the Sanctuary of the Sun in Cuzco, on the eve of the Spanish invasion and the fall of the Inca empire. It has been prophesied that when the sceptre of the Incas shall be grasped by the hand of one who has been dead, and is alive again, the ancient glories of their empire shall be restored. Golden Star, one of the sacred Virgins of the Sun, kneels at the foot of the altar and offers herself as the bride of him who will fulfil the prophecy. Vilcaroya swears for love of her to dare the ordeal. On the night of their bridal they are carried away to their secret resting place, and at the same time immense treasures are taken out of Cuzco, and hidden against the time of their awakening. Professor Martin Lamson brings back to England a unique mummy which he has found in a walled-in cave in a remote valley among the Cordilleras of the Peruvian Andes. A friend of his, Dr. Laurens Djama, a very clever physiologist, is present while he is unpacking it. He shows it to be entirely different from all other specimens of Inca embalming, and expresses the conviction that it might be possible to restore it to animation. The Professor consents to the experiment being made, and the mummy is removed to Djama's laboratory. In a week he sends for him and shows him his mummy alive and sleeping quietly in bed. The professor is so overcome by the sight that he falls fainting by the bedside.

BOOK I.

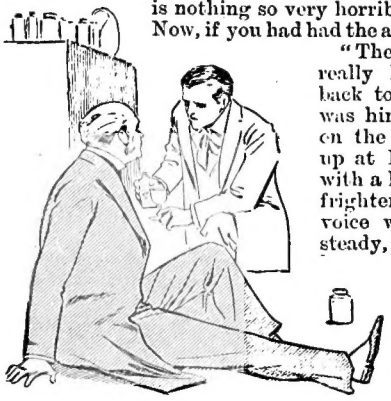
CHAPTER III.

THE WAKING OF VILCAROYA.

WHEN the Professor came to himself he was lying on the floor of the laboratory out of sight of the bed behind a great cupboard, glass doored and filled with bottles. Djama was kneeling beside him. A strong smell of ammonia dominated the other smells peculiar to a laboratory, and his brow was wet with the spirit that Djama was gently rubbing on it with his hand.

"What have I been doing?" he said, as with the other's assistance he got up into a sitting position and looked stupidly about him. "It isn't true, is it, that I really saw—Good God, no, it can't be; it's too horrible, I must have dreamt it."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow, nonsense. I should have thought you would have had better nerves than that. Come, take a nip of this, and pull yourself together. There is nothing so very horrible about it for you. Now, if you had had the actual work to do—"



"I should have thought you would have had bette nerves than that."

"Then it *is* true! You really have brought him back to life again. That was him that I saw lying on the bed." He looked up at Djama as he spoke with a half inquiring, half-frightened glance. His voice was weak and unsteady, like the voice of a man who has been stunned by some terrible shock, and is still dazed with the fear and wonder of it.

"Yes, of course it was," said Djama, "but I can tell you I should have hesitated before I had introduced you so suddenly if I hadn't thought that the nerves of an old traveller like you would have been a good deal stronger than they seem to be. It's a very good job that his Highness was only about half conscious himself when you collapsed, or you might have given him a shock that would have killed him again."

"Again?" said the Professor, echoing the last word as he got up slowly to his feet. "That sounds queer, doesn't it, to talk of killing a man again? I am more sorry than I can say, old man, that I was weak enough to let my feelings overcome me in such a ridiculous fashion. However, I am all right now. Give me another drain of that brandy of yours, and then let us talk. Is he still awake?"

Then the Inca's lips moved again.

"No, he dozed off again almost immediately, and you have been here about ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. Do you think you can stand another look at him?"

"Oh, certainly," said the Professor, who, as a matter of fact, felt a trifle ashamed of himself and his weakness, and was anxious to do something that would restore his credit. He followed the Doctor out into the laboratory again, and stood with him for some moments without speaking by the Inca's bedside. He was sleeping very quietly, and his breathing seemed to be stronger and deeper than it had been. He had slightly shifted his position, and was lying now half turned on his right side, with his right cheek on the pillow.

"You see he has moved," whispered Djama. "That shows that muscular control has been re-established. We shall have him walking about in a day or so. Ah! he is dreaming, and of something pleasant, too. Look at his lips moving into a smile. Poor fellow, just fancy a man dreaming of things that happened three hundred years ago and waking up to find himself in another world. I'll be bound he is dreaming about his wife or sweetheart, and we shall have to tell him, or rather you will, that she has been a mummy for three centuries. Look now, his lips are moving; I believe he is going to say something. See if you can hear what it is."

The Professor stooped down and held his ear so close that he could feel on his cheek the gentle fanning of the breath that had been still for three centuries. Then the Inca's lips moved again, and a soft sighing sound came from them, and in the midst of it he caught the words:

"Cori-Coyllur Nustallipa, Nusta mi!"

Then there came a long, gentle sigh. The Inca's lips became still again, shaped into a very sweet and almost womanly smile, as though his vision had passed and left him in a happy dreamless slumber.

"What did he say?" whispered Djama. "Were you able to understand it?"

"Yes," said the Professor, "yes, and you were right about the subject of his dream. Come away, in case we wake him, and I will tell you."

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They went to the other end of the laboratory, and the Professor went on, still speaking in a low half-whisper:

"Poor fellow, I am afraid we have incurred a terribly heavy debt to him. What he said meant, 'Golden Star, my princess, my darling,' so you see you were right, but poor Golden Star has been dead three hundred years and more, that is, at least, if his Golden Star is the same as the heroine of the tradition."

"What tradition?" asked Djama.

"It's too long a story to tell you now, but if she is the same, then our Inca's name is Vilcaroya, and he is the hero of the strangest story, and, thanks to you, the strangest fate, that the wildest romancer could imagine. However, the story must keep, for I wouldn't spoil it by cutting it short. The principal question now is, what are we going to do with him? We can't keep him here, of course?"

"No, certainly not," replied Djama, with knitted brows and faintly smiling lips. "His Highness must be cared for in accordance with his rank and our expectations. I shall have him taken into the house and properly nursed."

"But what about your sister; you will frighten her to death if you take in a living patient that has been dead for three hundred years?"

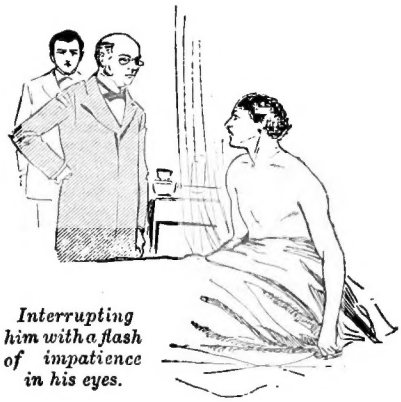
"Not if we manage it properly; there will be no need to tell Ruth the story yet, at any rate. I'll tell her that I am going to receive a patient who is suffering from a mysterious disease unknown to medical science. I'll say I picked him up in the Oriental Home in Whitechapel, and have brought him here to study him, and you and I must smuggle him into the house and put him to bed sometime when she is out of the way. Then I'll instal her as nurse; in fact, she will do that for herself; and as there is no chance of her learning anything from him, we can break the truth to her by degrees, and when His Highness is well enough to travel we'll all be off to Peru and come back millionaires, if you can only persuade him to tell you the secret of his treasure houses."

That night the Doctor and the Professor took turns in watching by the bedside of their strange patient, whose slumber became lighter and lighter until towards midnight he got so restless and apparently uneasy that Djama considered that the time had come to wake him and see if he was able to take any nourishment. So he set the Professor to work, warming some chicken broth over a spirit lamp, and mixing a little champagne and soda-water in one glass and brandy and water in another. Meanwhile he filled a hypodermic syringe with colourless fluid out of a little stoppered bottle, and then turned the sheet down and injected the contents of the syringe under the smooth bronze skin of the Inca's shoulder. He moved slightly at the prick of the needle, then he drew two or three deep breaths, and suddenly sat up in bed and stared about him with wide open eyes, full, as they well might be, of inquiring wonder.

Took turns in watching by the bedside.

The Professor, who had turned at the sound of the hurried breathing, saw him as he raised himself, and heard him say in the clear and somewhat high-pitched tone of a dweller among the mountains:

"Has the morning dawned again for the Children of the Sun? Am I truly awake, or am I only dreaming that the death-sleep is over? Where is Golden Star, and where am I? Tell me, you who have doubtless brought me back to the life we forsook together — was it last night, or how many nights or moons ago?"



Interrupting him with a flash of impatience in his eyes.

The words came slowly at first, like those of a man still on the borderland between sleep and waking; but each one was spoken more clearly and decisively than the one before it, and the last sentence was uttered in the strong, steady tones of a man in full possession of his faculties.

"Come here, Lamson," said Djama a trifle nervously. "Bring the soup with you, and some brandy, though I don't think he needs it. Do you understand what he said?"

"Yes," replied the Professor, coming to the bedside with a cup of soup in one hand and a glass of brandy and water in the other. Both hands trembled as he set the cup and the glass down on a little table. He looked at the Inca like a man looking at a re-embodied spirit, and said to him in Quichua:

"I am not he who has brought you back to life, but my friend here, who is a great and skilled physician, and master of the arts of life and death. You are in his house, and safe, for we are friends, and have nursed you back to health and waking life after your long sleep."

"But Golden Star," said the Inca, interrupting him with a flash of impatience in his eyes. "Where is she—my bride who went with me into the shades of death? Have you not brought her, too, back to life?"

The Professor stared in silence at the strange speaker of these strange words, which told him so plainly that the old legend of the death-bridal of Vilcaroya and Golden Star was now no legend at all, but a true story which had come down almost unchanged from generation to generation. Then an infinite pity filled his heart for this lonely wanderer from another age, whose friends and kindred had been dead and forgotten for centuries, and whose very nation was now only a name on a half-forgotten page of history.

"What does he say?" said Djama, breaking in upon his reverie. "I suppose he wants to know where he is, and what has become of that sweetheart of his he was dreaming about?"

"Yes," replied the Professor; "but you won't understand properly until I have told you the story. Poor fellow! I suppose we shall have to tell him the ghastly truth. Good Heavens! fancy telling a man that his wife has been dead for three hundred years or more! Look here, Djama, this business can't stop here, you know. What a fool I was, after all, not to see if there wasn't another chamber beside the one I found him in! Of course, there must be, and I have no doubt she is lying there at this present moment. We shall have to go and find her, and you must restore her as you have done him. Phew! where is it all going to end, I wonder!"

"And suppose we can't find her, or suppose I fail, even if I can bring myself to undertake that horrible work all over again," said Djama, looking almost fearfully at the Inca

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who was still sitting up in the bed glancing mutely from one to the other as though waiting for an answer to his question. Then, keeping his voice as steady as he could, the Professor told him the story of his resuscitation, addressing him by his own name and ending by asking him if he remembered when he and Golden Star had devoted themselves to die together, as the tradition said they had done.

"Yes, I remember," said Vilcaroya, with brightening eyes and faintly flushing cheeks. "How could I forget it? It was when the bearded strangers from the north had come and taken the usurper Atahuallpa prisoner in the midst of his conquering host at Cajamarca. It was after the Inca Huascar had been slain by stealth with a traitor's knife, it was on the night of the feast of Raymi when our Father the Sun had left the Sacred Fleece unkindled, and when was fulfilled the prophecy that the night should fall over the land of the Children of the Sun. Now, tell me, you who speak the language of my people, how long have I been sleeping?"

Instead of replying directly, he offered the Inca the cup of broth, and asked him first to take the nourishment that he must need so greatly after his long fast, telling him that it was needful to prevent him losing his new-found strength again. When he had eaten and drunk a little, then he would tell him what he could.

He took the broth and a little bread obediently, and while he was eating and drinking, the Professor translated what he had said to the Doctor. When he had finished, Djama looked at the Inca sitting there taking food and drink like any other human being, and with evident relish, too, and said:

"That happened in 1532, three hundred and sixty-three years ago! It sounds utterly incredible, doesn't it, and yet there he is, eating and drinking and talking with us just like any other man. I can hardly believe the work of my own hands, and I am beginning to half wish I had never begun it. Just imagine the awful loneliness to which we shall have condemned this poor fellow, supposing we can't find his Golden Star and restore her to him! Well, I suppose you had better tell him the truth at once. I think he can stand it. He has been a long time coming round, but I don't think there is much the matter with him now."

Then the Professor told Vilcaroya the, to him, so terrible truth that of all men in the world he was the most lonely, separated, as he was, from all that he had known and loved by an impassable gulf of nearly four long centuries—that his well-loved Golden Star was but a memory known to a few, a name in a vague tradition; that the resting-place, even of her mummy, was unknown, and that all that the darkest prophecy could have foretold had in very truth fallen upon the land of the Incas and the Children of the Sun.

Dressed in English clothing.

Vilcaroya heard him to the end in silence, then, raising his hands to his forehead and said:

"It is the will of our Father, foretold by the lips of his priests, but other things were foretold which shall be fulfilled as well as these. Golden Star is not dead, she only sleeps as I did. If I have awakened, why shall not she? I know where she lies; where Anda Huillac swore to me they would lay her. Come, let us go, I will take you to the place, and you shall restore her to me warm and living and loving as she was when I kissed her good-bye in the Sanctuary of the Sun, and I will give you treasures of gold and silver and jewels such as you have never dreamed of in exchange for her."

CHAPTER IV.

In a New World.

Nearly four months had passed since the reanimation of the Inca Vilcaroya had been accomplished, and he was now installed as a regular patient in the house of the man to whom he owed his second life. It would, however, be more correct to speak of him as a guest rather than as a patient, for in all physical respects he was in perfect health. Mentally, too, his faculties seemed to have suffered little, if anything, from their long stagnation. He had, in fact, shown a quickness of intellect, and a strength and swiftness of observation and comprehension, and a degree of mental discipline, which astonished even the Professor himself, familiar and all as he was with all that there was to be known of the high intellectual development and complicated civilisation of the lost race to which he belonged.

The Doctor's sister, Ruth.

He had already made no small progress, not only in colloquial English under the Professor's guidance, but also in the meaning and use of the strange written and printed signs of which the people of this new world in which he had awakened made such wonderful use. Like a visitant from another world, he was surrounded by all the thickly crowding marvels of a civilisation as utterly different from his own as the possible civilisation of another planet might have been, and of these marvels he was never tired of hearing, listening with a grave interest blended with an almost child-like wonder to all that his new friends and teachers could tell him of the past that had gone by since the far-off night of his death-bridal with Golden Star, and of the wondrous present into which he had returned from the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

There he was, a man full grown, and, in a sense, highly educated, and even cultured, dressed in English clothing, and looking but little different from many of the thousands of the foreign citizens of London, and yet his life-memories were those of an Inca prince of the sixteenth century. He had stepped out of a highly developed and complex state of society which had ceased to exist for some three hundred years, and after a single stride, unconsciously taken, he was standing in the midst of that of the latter end of the nineteenth century.

Only the wisdom and the jealous care of those who had undertaken the shaping of this new life of his saved him from the insanity which must almost inevitably have befallen the victim of so strange a caprice of fate under any other circumstances. Little by little they allowed him to become familiar with the marvels of his new world. First came description and then experience; walks in the less-frequented streets, and then in the busier ones; after that carriage drives in and about London.

He had, of course, never seen a horse or a dog, and his wonder at seeing a mounted rider for the first time was as great as that of his long dead fellow-countrymen when they saw Pizarro's troup of horse manœuvring in the great square of Cajamarca. Like them he believed horse and rider to be one animal until Djama had his own horse out and explained by demonstration the mysteries of horsemanship. Then, after due preparation, he was shown a railway train, a sight which tried his almost stoical self-control to the utmost. Then came a short journey, then a longer one, and after that he was shown the marvels of the Thames, with its shipping and steamers. Later on they took him on a steamboat voyage to Gravesend, and,

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lastly, on one across the Channel from London Bridge to Boulogne.

In all these excursions his constant companions were the Professor and the Doctor's sister, Ruth, who had gradually learned the marvellous story of their strange guest with a fearlessness that had not a little surprised both her brother and his friend.

She was a girl of but a little over twenty, slightly and yet gracefully shaped, with the active lissom grace of the Oriental subdued and yet strengthened by the strength she had inherited from her English mother. She had all her brother's dark Eastern beauty, yet softened and refined by the womanly grace whose perfection belongs only to the daughters of the Anglo-Saxon race.

A dreamer of strange dreams from her childhood, she had perhaps seen less of marvel in the coming of this lonely visitant from the past than either her brother or the Professor; and when she had been told, as she was one autumn night around the fire in the drawing-room, the story of the bridal of Vilcaroya and Golden Star, all her woman's heart went out to the strangely joined and strangely parted pair of lovers, one of whom was sitting by the fire beside her in that comfortable English drawing-room, listening as though he was striving to read the story with eager glances of his deep brown eyes on the lips of the Professor as he told it, while the other was lying cold and still in her death-sleep in a lonely cave among the wild mountains of Peru.

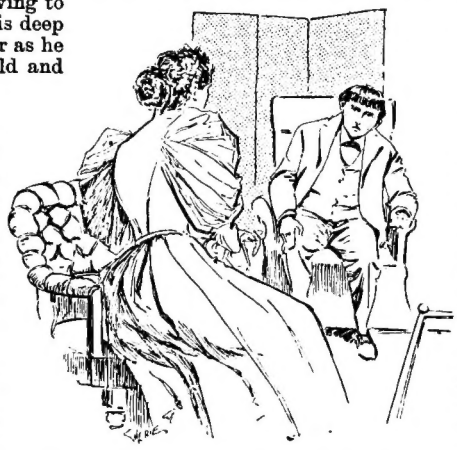
And then Vilcaroya, in the slow and halting sentences of his new tongue, began to talk of the ancient glories of his dead race and the splendours of the vanished empire that he had seen in the height of its power, and foretold, in a voice that sounded strangely like prophecy, how he would some day restore those splendours, and reign with Golden Star on the throne of his ancestors.

As for him, he looked upon her with something that was very like worship. To him she seemed to belong to some superior order of beings, born and living in another world than his. When first he had heard her laugh he had listened like one who hears some divine music for the first time, and, like a child seeking a dearly-sought favour, he asked her to do it again, which, of course, provoked merrier music than before, and then he named her Cusi-Coyllur, or Joyful Star, after the royal maiden of his own people, daughter of the Inca Pachacutic, who loved the handsome rebel Ollantay, and waited for him in the Convent of the Virgins of the Sun until he came in triumph to claim her.

She accepted his silent homage with a gentle dignity that made the giving of it grow daily sweeter for him, and watched over him in all his comings and goings in the new world that was so strange to him, almost as a mother might have watched over the early efforts of her child's awakening intellect. And soon, when his fast growing command of English made conversation possible between them, she quietly and by common assent assumed the *rôle* of his instructor both at home and abroad. She taught him to read and write, showed him maps and tried to make him understand how the world had grown since his last lifetime, and told him the names of trees and flowers and all the familiar objects in the world that were so new to him. Then she took him shopping with her and showed him the use of money, and told him, perhaps not altogether wisely, of the tremendous power that belonged to men and women who could wield at will the golden sceptre to which nearly all men and women bowed down with willing homage.

And yet, despite all this intimacy and confidence, he never spoke of the lost treasures of the Incas, to which he alone of all living men possessed the key, save with an ever-guarded reserve which gave no clue to their hiding place. Ruth scrupulously abstained from any attempt to trespass on what she soon divined to be a secret sacred, at any rate, for the present, but once the Professor yielded to Djama's persuasion, and asked him point blank whether the treasures really existed, and, if so, where they were hidden. This was when he had been about a fortnight in the house. He looked him straight and steadily in the eyes, and said, with a smile that meant far more than his words:

"You and your friend the Great Magician have wakened me out of the death-sleep because you wished to do so. I am thankful to you, for you have, perchance, given me the power to fulfil the oath that I swore to our father, the Sun, and I have promised you that when Golden Star comes back to me from her grave I will give you gold and silver and jewels in plenty; but the key to our hidden treasures is in the tomb of Golden Star, and from her hand I must take it before I may give it to you. Tell your friend the Great Magician that, since he is the only one who has the power to do to her as he has done to me, and loosen the bond of death that binds her to the grave."



She assumed the rôle of his instructor.

When the Professor told Djama of this he laughed, not altogether pleasantly, and said:

"I see, the English of that is that his Highness proposes to make a bargain with us—the price of a share of his treasures is the restoration of his Golden Star to life. Well, I suppose it is natural on his part, and after all it is perfectly fair, for in the nature of the case we couldn't ask him whether he wanted to be brought back into the world, and so, I suppose, it will have to be attempted, though I confess that after my experience with him, nothing but the hope of a very big fee would tempt me to do such work again.

"And then—suppose I make the attempt and fail! As I said before, I shall have to do the work on the spot, and he'll have us there in the middle of that awful wilderness of mountains, and we may find that the Inca ideas of justice and fair play are not quite ours, and things may take an awkward turn. However, we must hope for the best. I'll do all I can, you may depend upon it, for there must be millions in the business if it can only be carried through."

Vilcaroya pursued the even tenor of his new life with wonderful patience and docility for nearly six months in London while preparations for the momentous journey were being made. He saw clearly the immense advantage that lay in learning everything that he could of the new world into which he had come before he entered upon the work of his new life; so he stifled his longing, and set himself untiringly to the study of his new conditions, grasping fresh ideas with wonderful quickness, and holding them with a tenacity that knew no forgetfulness, and so matters went on till at last all the arrangements were completed.

Djama had handed over his practice to a brother of the craft for a year, the Professor cancelled all his engagements, and postponed the writing of his great work on the Civilisation of the Incas till he possessed more reliable data. Ruth had with quiet persistence overcome every objection that had been raised against her making one of the party, and so at last the berths in the West Indian mail steamer were taken, and the day of departure finally fixed.

(To be continued.)

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An Unexpected Reunion.

FRANK MILES sat in his bachelor chambers in Piccadilly, pretending to read; the examination which he was about to go up for was getting dangerously near, and he confessed to himself he had not latterly done so much reading as he ought to.

And even now, although his eyes mechanically rested on the words in the dry volume propped up before him, his thoughts were elsewhere, and after awhile he closed the book with a bang, and, puffing meditatively at his briar pipe, gave way to the pleasure of looking back.

Young men of twenty are not, as a rule, much given to retrospection; theirs is rather the pleasure of anticipation. The whole panorama of life, with its vast possibilities, lies before them, and they long to encounter them, rather than pass in reviewing the necessarily few boyish escapades through which they have already passed. Not that Frank Miles' retrospective reverie extended very far into his past; no more, in fact, than a brief two months; as it was exactly that period to a day since he had first seen the woman who was to exercise such an influence, although in a way he had little dreamed of at the time, on his future life.

There had been nothing romantic about the affair so far; it had simply been the infatuation of a young boy—or man perhaps would be more correct, in these go-ahead days when youngsters become men a good many years before their proper time as a rule.

His introduction to her had been quite in the ordinary course of events at a garden-party at Richmond, the hostess being a lady he had known from the time he had worn short frocks; and she had said in a matter of fact way: "Oh there's somebody here I want to introduce you to Frank, a Mrs. Lyle; her husband is in India and is coming home sometime this year, but as the climate did not suit his wife he sent her back in the spring. She is a most charming woman, and I am sure you will get on capitally together; ah, here she comes," as a stylishly dressed woman of about eight-and-twenty came towards them.

"I was just talking of you, my dear. This is my especial favourite, Frank Miles, who is supposed to be reading law, but I am afraid he is not so diligent as he ought to be."

The usual formal introduction followed, and as shyness was not one of Frank Miles' characteristics, in an incredibly short space of time he and Mrs. Lyle were on quite a friendly footing.

"Do you know," he said, "there's a jolly punt lying off the lawn? Do you care to go on the river?"

"It's the very thing I have been longing for all the afternoon; I should just love it."

Now, I am not prepared to say which is absolutely the very best place in the world for two young people to get on well with each other, but a Thames punt is not by any means the worst, and by the time they had finished their aquatic excursion Mrs. Lyle and Frank Miles had become sworn friends.

There was something irresistibly fresh and attractive to her about the good-looking, happy dispositioned lad, who was, on his part, evidently impressed with her good looks, and the result was they ran across each other pretty frequently during the next few weeks.

The lady was installed in a charming little flat in the West-end, and by virtue of her position as a married woman she was in a position herself to play the part of hostess to him, and this she had not scrupled to do.

The reverie in which he was indulging at the time this story opens was suddenly interrupted by the advent of a visitor in the shape of an extremely well-dressed young man, who came into the room without troubling to be announced, and threw himself down into an easy chair with the air of an intimate acquaintance.

"Day-dreaming again, you lazy beggar. I don't suppose you have touched a book this morning."

"Then you're altogether wrong for once; I was reading hard up to ten minutes ago."

"Well, then, you don't want to do any more to-day. Will you come with me to the Lyric to-night? I've got a box."

"To-night; let me see—yes, I've got nothing on."

"That's right, and we ought to have a jolly evening. By the way, Frank, you won't mind what I'm going to say, old man?"

"Not a bit; fire away."

"Well, do you know people are beginning to talk about you and the grass widow? I was at the club just now, and——"

"It really does not interest me what they say at the club, and I prefer not to discuss the matter further, if you don't mind."

"Right you are. I shall come here to-night and pick you up. Good-bye till then," and Charlie Sinclair took his departure.

"Now, then, for one or two hours' sound work," said Frank Miles with determination, as he settled down to the table and again propped the book in front of him. But the fates were against him; a knock at the door brought another interruption.

"A messenger boy has just brought this letter, and wants to know if there is an answer, sir."

The book got knocked over somehow, and he opened the envelope with a pleasant smile on his face. The letter it contained was brief but to the point: "My Dear Boy. What have I done to be so neglected? I haven't seen anything of you for three whole days; come and see me this evening; I have something very startling to tell you, so don't say you are engaged.—Very sincerely yours, Helen Lyle."

The gentleman's reply was equally laconic: "Dear Mrs. Lyle, I have been awfully busy reading, but I have

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a spare evening to-day, and will most certainly come, Yours very sincerely, F. Miles."

A few hours after a hansom deposited him at the door of the Empress Mansions, where, judging by the friendly, albeit respectful salutation of the doorkeeper, his face was not altogether unknown.

"Mrs. Lyle will be with you in a minute or two, sir," said the trim parlour-maid, ushering him into the well-known drawing-room, and closing the door as she spoke.

He looked round, as if half-expecting to see some change in the surroundings; but everything was as usual—as he knew it, in fact. And it was an undeniably pretty room, fit to contain, he thought to himself, her to whom it belonged, as he took a casual glance in the mirror to see that his tie was straight.

"Vanity, thy name is——"

"Woman, my dear Mrs. Lyle," he hastily interposed, coming forward to meet her, and, having secured her hand, holding it somewhat longer than was absolutely necessary, perhaps.

"Do you know you are looking awfully pretty to-night?"

"Thank you kindly, sir," she said, making him a demure courtesy; "and now please tell me why you haven't been to see poor me for three whole days."

"I have been awfully busy—reading, you know—and —and——"

"And what, pray?" with a mischievous smile.

"Well, I am afraid, you know, I am getting too fond of being in your society; they say people are beginning to talk."

"Talk, indeed, and what have they to talk about? I am older, ever so much older, than you, you know."

"Oh, Helen."

"Yes, I am, quite five years, and I am married, you know"—with dignity—"and that's why I wanted to see you to-night. My husband," the boy winced perceptibly, but she did not appear to notice it, and continued, "is coming home almost directly; he may be here to-morrow, even."

"To-morrow," he gasped out, "then this must be our last evening together."

"You silly boy, what difference can it make. I shall introduce you to my husband, and you will be the best of friends, I hope. But I must give up calling you Frank, for his name is Frank, too."

"And I suppose I must drop the Helen;" with a sigh.

"Well, the name perhaps, but not the personality. Do you know you promised me one of your photos, and you have never given me one—you must have some taken at once. No! no! not now; I don't mean that," as he half got up.

"I had some taken the other day, and I have them in my pocket now, I think," going towards his overcoat.

"And did you get all those done for me, or for who?" she asked mischievously.

"Well, partly for you, and partly for someone else."

"And who is she?"

"It is not a she at all; it is for my father."

"Your father! Bless the boy, I didn't know you had one; you never mentioned him. Is he here in town?"

"No, but he soon will be; and, do you know, I have never seen him?"

"Never seen your father! What do you mean?"

"Well, the fact is, my mother died when I was quite a baby; and my father went away, nobody knew where, and a sister of my mother's brought me up—and in her own name, too: so that until two months ago I didn't even know my own name. I have always been Frank Miles, and Frank Miles I shall continue," he said defiantly.

"How truly romantic; but has your father written to you, and explained his long silence?"

"No, he hasn't; but it seems he has been making me a handsome allowance all the time; and now he has written to his lawyers, who in turn have written to me, for a photo of myself, to send him through them, and I sent them one to-day; and now I am waiting to be claimed—identified, in fact, like they do the Johnnies at Scotland Yard."

"And you don't know——"

"I don't know anything more than I have told you."

"My poor boy, I am sorry for you!"

"Oh, Helen, it isn't that I mind; it is the losing you. I didn't know until to-night how much you were to me, and now it must all come to an end! If you had only been free!"

"But, you see, I am not, dear; and now do you know I have a story to tell you?

"When I married my husband, three years ago now, out in India, he told me that there was a secret connected with his life which he ought to have told me before we were married; but he put it off, and put it off, until I was just sailing for England, and then he said he would tell me when he came home for good, to settle down in the old country for the rest of his life. And now he is really coming, I feel a dread of what it may be. Oh, Frank, Frank, if ever you get married, and I hope you may some day, to some really nice girl, don't ever keep anything from her—promise me, promise me."

"I would promise you anything, dearest, and seal it too, if only I dared!"

Their two heads were remarkably close to each other, and it is impossible to say what might not have happened, had not the door suddenly opened and a man hastily entered.

"Well, little woman, here I am at last."

With a half hysterical cry, Mrs. Lyle rushed frantically forward, and fell into the arms of a tall, bearded man.

"Is it really you, dear? I didn't expect you till to-morrow."

"Well, here I am, pet; the boat got in earlier than I expected, and I only just stopped to call at my lawyer's before I came on; what a miserable light this is," turning up the lamp. "Hallo! I didn't see you weren't alone."

"This is a very dear young friend of mine—Mr. Frank Miles; this is my husband, Frank, you have so often heard me talk about."

The young man came forward with a somewhat flushed face, prepared to make the usual conventional greeting.

"Good Heavens! why it must be"—taking a photograph from his pocket—and then, to Frank Miles' intense surprise, kissing him fervently on the cheek.

"You know, Helen, I always told you I had something to confess. Well, this is it"—looking proudly at the dumfounded boy—"and nothing to be ashamed of either."

Explanations followed, and in the excitement of parental affection the elderly man fortunately failed to note the discomfiture of the other two personages in the little domestic comedy—or tragedy—which was it?

S. J. F. Newbery.

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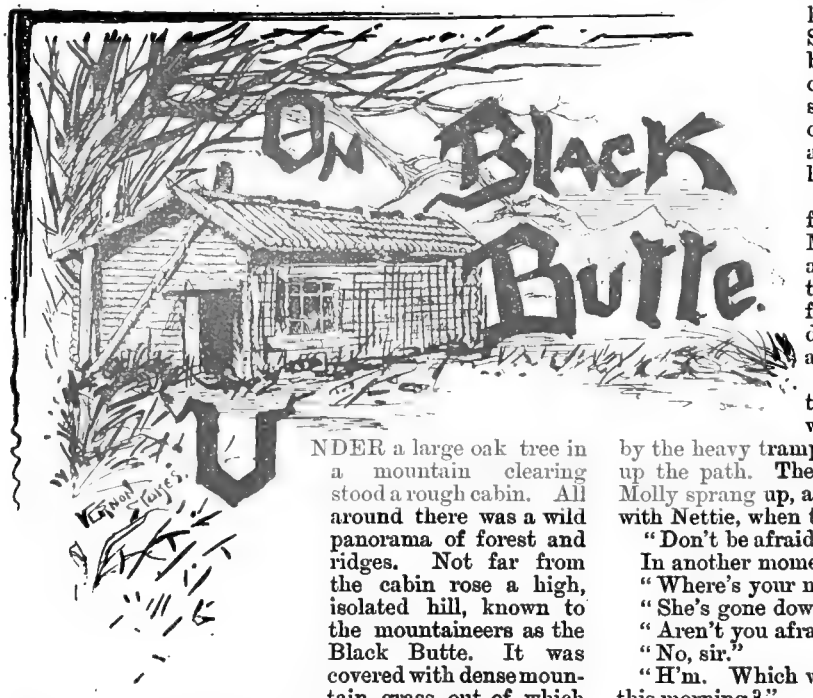

UNDER a large oak tree in a mountain clearing stood a rough cabin. All around there was a wild panorama of forest and ridges. Not far from the cabin rose a high, isolated hill, known to the mountaineers as the Black Butte. It was covered with dense mountain grass, out of which cropped many ledges of sandstone-like islands.

In this rude dwelling lived Mrs. Dargan and her two children. Molly, twelve years of age, and Nettie, a very pretty child of five, with big blue eyes and long white curls. She was the idol of her mother and sister.

There was a son also, a fine lad of sixteen, but he was working manfully in the sawmill down in the cañon, whose dull drone could be heard when the wind was right, and whose shrill whistle marked the time for the little family on the mountain.

Mr. Dargan, who was a turbulent, dissipated man, had abandoned his family, and nothing had been heard of him for three or four years. It was better for them, the mountain people said.

Mrs. Dargan held the quarter-section of Government land that her husband had staked out as his claim during a "gold rush," and she and her two elder children were working hard to accumulate money enough to pay the few shillings per acre required by the Government, and secure their patent or title. In pursuance of this object, Mrs. Dargan often left Molly and little Nettie at home while she went down to the mill-village to do washing for people there.

The summer had opened very hot. The sandstone ridges seemed to quiver under the blazing sun. The grass dried up; the open hills turned brown. From behind McLaughlin's Ridge, which loomed like a wall against the sky, rolled dense volumes of smoke from forest fires. This settled into the cañon, making everything hazy and indistinct.

One morning Molly and Nettie went out and picked a pailful of wild blackberries, returning to the cool shelter of the cabin when the sun became hot. A portion of the fruit they ate for their lunch, with a spare allowance of sugar, and plenty of cream furnished by faithful Peggy, the cow, who found her living on the neighbouring hills.

Mrs. Dargan intended going to the mill the next day, and, which was unusual, remaining over night, as she had two days' work promised her. So she made a pie with the remaining berries, and set it away in a little cool safe, which was fastened on the shady side of the big oak tree, in order that the children might have a rare dainty to console them during her absence.

Early next morning she set out for the mill, three miles distant. Molly busied herself about the house, and talked to Nettie with an important and motherly air. She felt no fear at being left in charge in the daytime, but her heart sank a little as she thought of the coming night.

About noon she was sitting in the little porch while Nettie played with her doll, when she was startled by the heavy tramp of horses. Four men came riding up the path. They carried rifles across their saddles. Molly sprang up, and was about to retreat into the cabin with Nettie, when the leader called out:

"Don't be afraid, sis. We won't hurt you."

In another moment they drew up before the door.

"Where's your mother?" asked the leader.

"She's gone down to the mill, sir," replied Molly.

"Aren't you afraid to stay here alone?"

"No, sir."

"H'm. Which way did the man go who passed here this morning?"

"I didn't see anyone pass this morning."

"Have you seen a strange man about here lately—a lame man with a long black beard?"

"No, sir."

The men consulted together in low tones. Then the leader turned to Molly with a pleasant smile, and said:

"Well, sis, keep a sharp look-out for that fellow. He's a bad man, and the officers want him. He was shot in the leg when he escaped, and you'll know him by his limp. Catch him for us, and we'll pay you a handsome reward. Good-bye."

The men laughed and rode away, leaving Molly greatly alarmed at their startling words. The thought of a desperate criminal at large in her vicinity was terrifying. She hurried into the house with Nettie and bolted the door.

Towards evening she ventured out, fearfully, when a gentle lowing told her that Peggy had come up to be milked and receive her usual handful of bran. With frightened eyes she glanced at the darkening woods and hills, but saw nothing to justify her alarm; yet she breathed more freely when she was again safely behind her bolted door. In her apprehension she even forgot the blackberry pie.

She built a fire in the fireplace, for the Californian nights are cool, even in midsummer, and spent the evening singing to Nettie and telling her stories. There was no light in the cabin except the fire, for oil was expensive.

In the middle of a story Molly was startled by a strange flash of light, which swiftly traversed the opposite wall and vanished. For a moment her heart seemed to leap into her throat, and she was overcome by fear. Then she realised that the light came from the outside, and had flashed through the window. Swiftly, without noise, she placed Nettie in a corner, warning her to keep still because someone was coming; then she scattered the brands in the fireplace, and threw ashes on them.

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She crept to the window and looked out. A strange beam of light cut athwart the darkness and flashed weirdly over trees and bushes, then wheeled and darted through the window again with a blinding glare. Molly dropped to the floor and listened.

She heard slow, cautious footsteps approaching. They were irregular, like the steps of a man who limps. They came nearer and reached the porch. A gleam of light poured through the crack under the door, and as suddenly vanished. The strange visitor evidently carried a dark lantern. Then there was a heavy knock. Molly did not answer, and presently the latch rattled and the door creaked under a heavy pressure.

"Who's there?" called Molly, in a tone of fright.

"Is your mother at home?" growled a hoarse voice.

"What do you want?" gasped Molly, still more frightened. Nettie began to cry, and Molly hastened to her corner and tried to sooth her.

"Who's that crying?" asked the gruff voice.

"It's my little sister. You've frightened her half to death. Please go away," replied Molly, with a bravery that surprised herself.

"Open the door and give me something to eat. Don't be afraid. I won't hurt you," said the man a little less fiercely.

Molly sprang up.

"I can't open the door," faltered Molly. Then a happy thought came to her. "There's a pie in the safe by the oak tree," she cried. "You can take that. It's the best we've got."

The man hesitated a little and muttered to himself, and then she heard him limp away towards the safe. For a few minutes there were indistinct sounds, and an occasional ghostly flash of light. Then everything was still.

Molly sat all night holding the sleeping Nettie and watching in darkness and profound silence; and she murmured a heartfelt thanksgiving when the first light of dawn brightened the window.

She waited till the sun was high before venturing out. She judged that the man would be hidden in some secure place during the day. But she had not recovered from her fright. She resolved to drive up Peggy and milk her, and then take Nettie and go down to the mill. She noticed that the safe was open and the pie was gone.

Nettie seemed to have forgotten her fright of the previous evening, and was in high spirits. Molly gave her Rosy, the doll, to play with, and bade her sit in the porch while she went after the cow.

With flying feet Molly traversed the path across the bushy ravine, and hastened breathlessly up the grassy ridge. She soon found Peggy, and drove her home at a speed that astonished the worthy cow. She then hurried to the cabin for the milk-pail, and there a terrible discovery burst upon her. The doll lay in the porch, and Nettie was gone. She rushed frantically hither and thither, shouting Nettie's name, but the child had vanished as if the earth had swallowed her up. For some time she continued the search, crying bitterly, and wildly calling, but without avail.

Then an idea occurred to her. Perhaps Nettie, eager to see her mother, had started along down the path to the mill. Inspired with new hope, she hurried in pursuit; but as turn after turn in the path was passed, and no bright head with white curls appeared, hope drooped in her heart and a horrible fear took its place. It now seemed certain to her that Nettie had been stolen away by their dreadful visitor of the previous night. So she flew on in search of help.

Soon after Molly left the cabin, the four horsemen with rifles came slowly round the base of the Black Butte. They were evidently following the trail.

"He was here last night or this morning, sure," said the sheriff. "I think he's hid on the Black Butte somewhere."

"If he's hid on the Black Butte we won't get him in a hurry," grumbled one of the men. "It's the thickest place in the county."

They followed the trail to the cabin, which they found deserted. The men looked uneasy, and examined the entire place eagerly and keenly.

"I hope he hasn't hurt the kids," muttered the grumbler. "We most orter took 'em down to the mill yesterday."

They soon took up the path again, which led along the base of the Butte, and finally disappeared in the dense thickets that covered the hill.

"He's hid on Black Butte, boys," declared the sheriff, "and we've got him."

"Ain't you a little too fast?" expostulated the grumbler. "He's got us just as much as we've got him. He won't come out, and it's no good to crawl into that brush after him."

"We'll make him come out," remarked the sheriff coolly, as he dismounted and stirred with his foot the

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thick carpet of dead leaves that covered the ground. "You and Tom ride round to the other side of the Butte and take positions where you can put him up when he leaves cover. Then Jack and I will set fire along the edge of the brush half-way around. The wind is right, and it'll take the fire over the hill in half an hour, and it won't do much damage beyond."

The two men rode away, and after some time had elapsed, a rifle shot announced that they had reached their stations. The sheriff and his companion then lit torches and began setting fire to the bushes along the bottom hill.

The flames caught the dry leaves like tinder, and spread swiftly and fiercely; then they leapt into the brush and flared up with a sharp and startling sound. Then the wind sprang up, and fiery red serpents darted roaring up the hill, their breath turning everything to flame. The bushes were transfigured for an instant, then they shrivelled up and vanished in the hot whirlwind.

The two men stood together and gazed upon the monster they had unchained. Suddenly the sheriff started and cried out:

"Did you hear anything, Jack?"

"No; what was it?"

"I thought I heard a child crying up there on the hill," gasped the sheriff, as pale as death.

"Oh, no; 'twas only the hissing of the green bush in the fire, I guess," replied Jack, a little startled.

The lower portion of the Butte was now a roaring mass of flames, darting, soaring, and licking up everything with terrific energy. A low redwood tree stood on the hill. The fire seized it, and went leaping zig-zag to the top, like a red and yellow acrobat, howling in triumph and flinging out banners of flame from the topmost boughs.

The sheriff was still nervous and only half reassured.

"I wouldn't have started it if I'd known 'twould burn so fierce," he muttered.

Suddenly Jack uttered a yell and pointed upward. A tall, black-bearded man was hastily limping across a rocky opening on the side of the hill. He turned as he heard the shout, and shook his fist at the two men with a gesture of rage and defiance. Then he halted, came back a few steps, and remained a moment gazing earnestly down the hill.

And then the sheriff and Jack saw a terrible sight. On a ledge of sandrock, which rose up only a little in advance of the fire, stood a pretty little child, with long, white curls flying in the heated wind. Sometimes the smoke hid her. She was gazing at the frightful scene before her and screaming with terror.

The fire was lapping the rock.

"Oh, God," cried the sheriff in a tone of intense agony.

The officers were brave men. They ran along the edge of the fire, through beds of glowing coals and amongst the blazing grass, seeking for a place to rush through and save the child. Their boots shrivelled up and scorched their feet, their clothes smoked and burnt, and they recoiled half suffocated. They saw that though they might charge through the flames and reach the child, it would only be to die with her. They could never return.

They turned their despairing eyes once more towards the poor babe. The smoke rolled away, and both uttered a frantic shout of joy. The black-bearded fugitive stood on the rock beside the child. He was stripping off his outer garments and carefully wrapping her in them. Then he lifted her in his arms and stood for a moment calmly choosing his way of escape.

The fire was lapping the rock. It was sweeping by on both sides and rushing up the steep hillside. The man saw that it would be impossible to escape in that direction. He would be overtaken and destroyed. He sprang down from the ledge and disappeared.

The merciless flames swept on. In a moment the two men below saw him rushing down from the fiery ring, his precious burden clutched closely to his breast, his face pressed against her, running, stumbling, falling, crawling, rising again and staggering on. With one impulse they dashed in to help him. As he drew near, reeling dizzily, they seized him, and half led, half dragged him out of that fierce furnace to the cool ground beyond, where he dropped and fell lifeless.

They extinguished his burning clothing, and tore the blazing wrappings from the child whose life he had saved. They brought water and tried to revive him, but he had inhaled the flames, and never breathed again.

As they lifted the crying child they saw that she still held in her fingers a large black-and-yellow butterfly, in pursuit of which she had wandered from the cabin and become lost in the brush of the Black Butte. The gaudy insect dropped from her hand and fell on the breast of the dead man.

Frightened voices were heard, and Mrs. Dargan rushed forward, caught up Nettie, and hugged her close, kissing and soothing her.

"Where did you find her?" she panted. "How thankful I am."

"Do not thank us," he said solemnly. "There lies the man who lost his life in saving her."

Mrs. Dargan looked and started forward. Then she turned to the sheriff with a pale look of touching dignity, and said:

"He is my husband."

She turned to the dead again, and put her hand to her eyes. They saw tears trickling through her fingers.

C. E. B.

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A LION'S FEAST

WE had our camp at the big bend of the Zonga River, where it approaches nearest the great desert of the Hottentot country, and one morning word was brought in that we had captured a very large lion in a pit which had been dug for that purpose. Among the natives who went out in advance of us were two fellows who had been threatening each other with personal violence ever since we left the Vaal River. Both were tall, strong men, and each had his following, as is always the case, even in civilised communities.

They had been restrained only by threats of the Colonel to turn them out of camp. They met at the lion pit, and by accident or otherwise one jostled the other. It was the spark leading to an explosion. Tom-Tom, as we had nicknamed one of them, seized the other, whose title was Joe-Joe, and with a twist and a wrench threw him into the pit upon the lion. It was a terrible thing to do, and neither the Colonel nor I believed that Tom-Tom really meant to do it, though he would not have hesitated to use hatchet or knife.

We met the natives coming back with the murderer in custody, and they demanded that his life should pay the forfeit. The pair of us ran on to the pit in hopes to save Joe-Joe, but we were too late. The lion was not hungry, but in a terrible temper over his capture, and he had killed the man as soon as he could get to him. Had the victim lost his life in a fair fight, nothing would have been done. Had he been stabbed to death in camp, the murderer would have to give his widow, or other relatives, about half-a-crown's worth of beads. As it was, the men would hear of no punishment short of death.

About ten o'clock in the forenoon, having exhausted every effort, and the men beginning to threaten loudly, we turned Tom-Tom over to them. He had been very quiet all the morning, and when told that he must die he exhibited no emotion. He was in his prime, and had a wife and three children at home, but he was too brave and proud-spirited to break down. He had a choice of death—that is, they would strip him and leave him bound hand and foot on an ant hill, or he should be flung to the lion, who had, by that time, eaten the last morsel of poor Joe-Joe. He would rather have been shot or clubbed, but they thought that would be getting off too easily. After thinking it over for a while, he said to us:

"I have seen men left to the ants, and it was sometimes a whole day before they died. If I am thrown into the pit the lion will kill me within a minute, and there will be no suffering. And, too, the man who is killed by the lion dies a proud death, and his wife and children need not be ashamed to say how he died. Yes, I will die that way. The lion will not be hungry again before to-morrow, but I wish the men to annoy him until he raves with anger. Then he will finish me at once, and you can get the cage and secure him."

Tom-Tom talked the matter over as calmly as if speaking of an ox gone astray. We saddled up and rode away. What followed was told to us on our return. A portion of the natives armed themselves with long poles and sticks and stones and angered the lion until he was positively furious. Tom-Tom was then led forward. All agreed that he was the least excited of the crowd. Two strong fellows had been appointed to fling him into the pit, but when he was brought forward he said:

"I am to die for causing the death of a man who thirsted for my life. I do not complain of that, but I wish to die like a man. Unbind me and stand back. I know what a lion can do. He can kill an ox with a blow of his paw, and he can crush the largest bone at one bite. He will kill me before you can count twenty, but he would afterwards be ashamed that he had killed a man who was helpless. Jab him with your poles and make him furious. That's the way! Hear his cries of rage! See how he leaps up in hopes to get out! You are now going to see a brave man die. Look sharply, for you will never see the like again. When you return home you will tell everybody that I threw Joe-Joe to the lion, but you will also say that I was killed by the same beast. Now I'm going; good-bye all."

He stepped to the edge of the pit, which was about twelve feet deep, and dived head first down upon the lion, who was standing on his hind feet. There was a fierce roar, muffled growls, a struggle lasting a few seconds, and the men looked down and knew that Tom-Tom was dead.

The lion was so thoroughly aroused that it was not until the next day we could make a move to cage him, and it took us over half a day to bring him out of the pit and make him a secure prisoner. After he was out of the pit I looked into it, but there was very little to be found to tell of the double tragedy. Then I closely inspected the caged beast, but he had licked himself clean, and was hungry for another victim.

E. C. WAGGENER.

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It was a pretty little windmill, with its big round tower capped by a weather vane, its long arms or blades which rattled in the west wind like the sails of a boat in stays, and its little round windows looking over the hills of Anjou like the telescopes of an astronomer—such was the windmill of Bernardeau; and when it was working, all the windmills of the neighbourhood looked like white seagulls pursued by a bird of prey.

It was situated on the slope of the Guigne, at the end of a little crooked pathway hardly wide enough for the mill donkey, and in which one might search in vain for traces of human footprints, because it was so dark under its vault of shrubbery, so muddy and rugged, that the woman of the mill always took to the vines when on her way to Ancenis on foot.

And a handsome woman, too, was this lady of the mill. She was twenty-five years old, and with a well rounded form, a little hand, flashing dark eyes, and lips as red as wild cherries. She was smart in her attire, and there was little in her appearance to reveal the fact that she was a widow. When she came into the village, mounted upon the donkey that carried her bags of flour, all the young fellows came out to admire her fine figure and the beautiful ankles which appeared below her short skirt.

Even the donkey himself seemed proud of his mistress. He travelled along at an easy gait, tossing his head and cocking his ears, as if to say to everybody: "Here she is, you have only to look at her; this is La Meunière du Bernardeau. There isn't another woman like her in all the country!"

And that was the truth. But she was the subject of a great deal of gossip. How the tongues did wag on her account. It was said that since the death of her husband, a poor goose of a fellow who had taken her without a penny from a farm and left her all his property, she frequently tossed her cap over the blades of her windmill. Whether this was true or not, the blades certainly never told; but one thing is certain, and that is that she did hang up her cap there publicly on one occasion, and it cost her her life. Here is her story:

The first thing the Vendéens did when they rose in revolt against the Republic was to make use of the windmills. Nothing could be better suited for signalling or more troublesome for the enemy. Where the Blues could only see white wings turning round in a melancholy fashion, the Chouans possessed a perfect telegraphic system, which told them of the movements of the Republican army.

The windmill of Bernardeau was one of the principal vedettes on the Loire. Three days before the attack upon Nantes, Cathelineau came to the mill of Bernardeau and asked for shelter. It was the 22nd of June, 1793. Bonchamp had been at Athens since the 17th awaiting the main body of the army. The weather was magnificent, and the Vendéens camped in the open air. When Cathelineau at the end of a little road found himself face to face with the beautiful woman of the mill, he asked her if she was a Royalist.

"One might easily become a Royalist to serve under so handsome an officer as you," said she.

"Good enough! Then let me have shelter here to-night."

La Meunière cheerfully welcomed him, and Cathelineau slept that night in the mill. The next morning, when he was leaving, she sent to him from the threshold of the mill a perfect volley of kisses, after which she went up to the highest window in the mill and waved her little white handkerchief.

Eight days afterwards Cathelineau, mortally wounded, was coming from Ancenis in a carriage, and as he passed by the mill he cast a long and sad look at it. According to the order, its blades were arranged so as to announce the approach of the soldiers of Canclaux.

From the 17th of October to the 17th of December, during the sixty days which separated the two retreats of the Vendéen army on the Loire, the mill of Bernardeau continued its signals of intelligence with those of La Vendée. But the 17th of December was its last day.

Harassed by the Mayençais, that crushed them at the Battle of Mans, the Vendéens reached Ancenis and endeavoured to cross the Loire; but for want of sufficient rafts, a considerable number of them were obliged to abandon the effort and to advance through the country, in the hope of escaping the enemy.

At sight of this old mill, which they immediately recognised as an ally, about twenty men took refuge in it just at the moment when Westermann came to the heights of Bel Air.

Suddenly a puff of blue smoke rolled from one of the upper windows of the mill. La Meunière herself commenced the fight.

"Good shot!" she said; "there is one less now."

Westermann ordered a company of hussars to surround the old mill. He was in too great a hurry to finish with La Rochejacquelin to bother himself with windmills. The hussars had hardly arrived at the mill before his flying artillery began to cannonade the few rafts of the Chouans who were endeavouring to cross the Loire. The officer who was in command of the company summoned the occupants of the mill to surrender.

La Meunière opened a little window, fastened her

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lace cap on the point of one of the blades, and shouted out:

"Come and get it, you ill-shaped puppy!"

A volley from the hussars was the only answer to these insolent words. The window-panes were broken to fragments. The Vendéens inside returned the fire, and dropped five of the horsemen. The company then dismounted, and rushed against the door of the mill, which they broke with the butts of their guns.

"Surrender, you scoundrels, or in a few moments you'll all be dead!" shouted the officer.

"You are the scoundrels!" yelled the woman of the mill. "Let me see if you are able to get my cap."

The hussars entered the lower storey, but the ladder was removed by the Vendéens, who now fired upon them from the storey above, and made terrible ravages in their ranks.

The woman of the mill busied herself with the work of loading the guns, a task which she performed with astonishing rapidity. The Chouans, sheltered behind the flour sacks, cared little for the fire of the Blues.

"Take good aim!" cried La Meunière; "don't let a single one escape."

The officer, seeing his men falling all round him, ordered them to come out and take the place by storm, scaling the arms of the mill. It was a magnificent assault. Twenty hussars clambered up the blades. With their carbines thrown across their backs, they clambered up like sailors to the storey above, and from there fell either killed or wounded under the balls or the bayonet thrusts of the Vendéens. One brigadier managed to get up to the roof by making a rampart of the bodies of his comrades, who held on to the arms like drowning men to planks.

"We are all right, my friends!" cried he. "Guard well the entrance of the mill!" After planting the colours of the company on the weather-vane, he bored a hole in the roof to admit the barrel of his gun. Three times he fired, and mortally wounded three men. This threw the besieged into a panic; resistance was becoming impossible, and the Vendéens were already raising the butts of their guns in the air, when La Meunière pushed down the ladder and cut off their retreat. "Now die like men!" she shouted. Then there commenced a perfect massacre. Attacked above and below, the Vendéens fought like imprisoned lions. When the ammunition was exhausted, they threw down the sacks of corn and flour, and, clubbing their muskets, jumped down among the Blues, who received them on the points of their bayonets. It was a horrible spectacle.

"Where is La Meunière?" shouted the hussars.

"Here she is, citizens," said she, as she let herself slip along the shaft of the mill. "I have given you no quarter, and I don't want any mercy from fellows like you."

"All right," said the officer. "We'll settle your account in short order. Place yourself against that wall."

There was something singularly graceful and proud in her bearing, and a glance of withering contempt in her eye as she advanced towards the wall. Her splendid black hair was now floating in disorder upon her shoulders. She gathered it modestly around her breast. Then she stood against the wall.

"Now, scum of the earth, fire!" said she.

This piece of feminine boldness made the officer hesitate.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Twenty-five."

"Your name?"

"I am La Meunière du Bernardeau."

"Do you want to live?"

"No, I'd rather die than receive mercy from you."

"Come now, simply shout 'Long live the Republic,' and I'll let you go free."

"Long live the King!" she cried in a vibrating voice.

A moment afterwards there was the rolling sound of a volley. That was the last of La Meunière du Bernardeau.

"She was a plucky piece of flesh, all the same," said the soldiers.

Westermann's hussars lost in that attack twenty-two men and eight wounded.

Since then the mill has remained abandoned as if it were cursed. Open to all the winds of heaven, without a roof, without arms, it stands. Occasionally a tramp passing through the country takes shelter there, and sleeps with the swallows and the bats. Following its well-known habit, the ivy, which seems to be in love with ruins, gradually entwined itself round it, and from a distance the uncrowned tower has the aspect of a ruined fortress.

J. P. L.

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AN INCIDENT OF THE MUTINY.

SERGEANT DONALD MACFARLANE was one of the soldiers to whom it had been vouchsafed, whether happily or unhappily, to hew their way into Cawnpore under Havelock, and thereby secure a view of the results of Nana Sahib's work in and around that now historic well.

With torn and tattered uniform, bleeding from a prodigious cut in the head, and thoroughly begrimed with powder from the roots of his red hair to the soles of his feet, the tall Scotchman presented a singularly dramatic figure. It was after a swift look into the face of a dead woman, about whose neck were coiled the slender arms of a four-year-old boy, also dead, that the big non-commissioned officer uttered the awful, indescribable scream that had so shocked and awed his comrades, and which so many had since supposed had marked the at least partial dethronement of his reason.

Not that many men similarly situated would not have cried out. Five years before, this slip of a woman—she looked very slender and girlish as she lay there, so still, on the top of that woeful heap—had been a bonny, merry-hearted milkmaid, dancing over the heather of her father's tiny farm beyond Dundee. And the little chap with the yellow curls and the great, saucy blue eyes, who clung so closely to his mother's neck despite the cruel bayonet thrust through his little body—had he not been the life and soul of the barracks, the pet of the officers and the idol of the men? Yes; considering the days and nights of anguish, the hoping against hope, the bitter suspense and then this grievous ending to it all, Sergeant Donald Macfarlane had good excuse for crying out. Many a strong man has done so on even less provocation.

While his frenzied comrades rushed madly away to the slaughter and the sack, the Scottish sergeant knelt, in perfect silence, after that one cry, beside his dead. He straightened out the form of his wife and arranged her disordered garments decently. Then he loosened the clasp of the little arms and took his boy into his own mighty ones.

After the fighting was over they found him there, kissing the white cheeks and crooning lullabies to the little fellow in his quaint, North Country dialect. When they led him away he laughed, and kicked playfully at the head of a dead Sepoy that lay in his path.

* * * * * *

All through the long, hot siege of Delhi Sergeant Donald Macfarlane performed his duties as became a man and a soldier. And yet there was something queer about him. He would stand for a half hour at a time gazing stolidly up at the scorching Indian sky, gnawing and tugging nervously at the straggly red beard about which his comrades had been in the habit of joking him so mercilessly in happier times. He even forgot to salute his officers at times, but was never reproved for it. There was a tacit recognition of his condition throughout the regiment. Behind his back he was pityingly spoken of as "Poor daft Donald!" The nickname explained it all. Sergeant Macfarlane was evidently not himself mentally. Whether or not his fighting qualities were unimpaired could only remain a matter of conjecture.

And so the burning days dragged themselves along until August came, and with it Nicholson, with reinforcements from the Punjaub. And then, more waiting, until the middle of September, when the immortal assault was decided upon.

It was the night before that prodigious scene of storm and tumult in which the intrepid Nicholson fell. In the British camp there was silence, but in one of the white tents Sergeant Donald Macfarlane and some eight or ten of his company were seated at a long, rough table, drinking and discussing in undertones the probable events of the morrow. Outside, the quiet stars were shining as gently and placidly as if the coming daylight were not to witness one of the direst scenes of carnage in history.

Under the influence possibly of the great joy of the anticipated combat, Sergeant Macfarlane had seemed more like himself during the day. He had thawed out to some of his comrades, and was even now drumming gently on the table with his big horny fingers, as a burly private, with a pronounced Cockney accent, trolled out, in a voice by no means unmusical, some popular Whitechapel lay.

The minstrel was in the very middle of a stanza, when, to the utter astonishment of everyone present, Sergeant Macfarlane leapt to his feet with a look in his face that no one present had ever seen there before. His small, blue eyes were blazing, and there was a thin line of foam on his white, twitching lips.

He hurled his glass of brandy to the floor, and banged on the table with his great fist, as he shouted: "Dinna-r-r sing, mon! Dinna-r-r sing!"

The manner in which he rolled out the r's would have stopped any song. It certainly stopped this one. Some of the men looked annoyed; others questioning and pitying.

It was the interrupted singer himself that presently spoke: "Wot hails yer, Donald, me lad?" he asked wonderingly.

The big Scotchman was staring over their heads. "Hist, ye loons!" he cried hoarsely. "D'ye remember Cawnpore?"

Instantly every figure grew tense and every face hard.

"Aye!" went on "daft Donald," his voice rising from a roar to a sort of shriek, "ye mind it weel, I hae nae doot. Weel—I hae mindit it. An' it's puir business ye're in, lads, singin' an' shoutin' the nicht, when it's down on yer knees afore the Lord ye should be, praisin' Him for the chance to smite the black fiends, heep an' thigh, on the morrow! Listen, lads! Ye are a' brave an' honest an' true. Nae better men e'er wore the Queen's scarlet. Wull ye tak an oath wi' me the nicht?"

The fury of battle had leaped into every eye at the man's words. As he finished there was a roaring bass chorus: "Aye, Donald; we will!"

"Then," went on Sergeant Macfarlane, in tones that evidenced the deadliness of his intent, "be the memory o' ma deed Jess—be the memory o' ma little eennocent Donald—be the memory o' a' te ither batchert anes, I sweer lads, that on the morrow I'll spare neither mon, wumman, nor chiel that fa's intil these hans be slain. Come, sweer wi' me!"

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He stretched out his great hands, and they were grasped in turn by the other men. The oath was taken. Whereupon, Sergeant Donald Macfarlane, weakly enough, sank into his seat, bowed his shaggy red head across his arms on the table, and sobbed like a child. His comrades, who were quite unused to this sort of thing, sneaked one by one out of the tent.

* * * * *

No soldier of the storming party fought as the red-headed Scottish giant fought that day. After four hours of tumult and butchery—butchery that brought the keenest delight to his now utterly savage soul—he found himself without a scratch, and, truth to tell, a little weary. The streets were thick with dead and wounded, and from many a glittering column and pinnacle streams of flame were pouring.

Begrimed with powder and blood, and choking with thirst, the sergeant stood leaning against the bamboo doorpost of an unpretentious dwelling in a side street, watching a miniature battle going on between a dozen Sepoys and redcoats fifty feet away. He looked up wearily as a burly private, with bloodstained pugaree tied round his forehead, and minus his helmet, staggered up to him with outstretched hand. It was Bill Smith, the Whitechapel minstrel of the previous evening.

"Well, ole chap," he shouted, "hain't this bloomin' glorious? An' 'ave yer been pyin' hoff old scores, hay?"

The Scotchman glanced at the weapon in his hand. He had thrown away his musket and picked up a beautiful curved sword with a hilt of gold studded with jewels. The red blade told its own story. "Daft Donald" smiled grimly as he answered, "I hae kept ma vow."

Bill looked at him and noted the calm look in the blue eyes. The battle and the slaughter seemed to have brought back the man's reason.

At the private's suggestion they entered the building in search of water. It seemed to be deserted. Passing through a dim passage they came into a long, light room, with a low white ceiling. As they entered, a Hindoo woman, half clad, and her black hair streaming over her shoulders, sprang from a crouching attitude on the floor, and stood with her back against the wall, dumb with terror. At her side, and holding her by the hand, stood a little brown urchin, with inky hair and big, wondering eyes.

"Daft Donald" gave a scream of delight and sprang forward with sword upraised. His companion clutched him by the arm, crying hoarsely: "Sergeant—for the love o' God!"

Macfarlane turned upon him sternly. "Hoot mon!" he exclaimed contemptuously, "dost mind thy oath?"

The Cockney private's face flushed through the powder stains. "Aye," he answered simply.

"Then," roared the Scotchman, "do thy share. Bayonet the mother—I'll do for the brat!"

The other threw his weapon to the floor with a crash. "I'll see yer dead furst," he said. The little Indian boy jumped forward and began to play delightedly with the bright bayonet.

But now the light of madness flashed into the Scotchman's eyes once more. With a howl of fury he sprang at the woman and tore from her neck a slender gold chain to which a small gold locket was attached. "Look, mon!" he screamed to Private Smith, "ma Jessie's locket—ma weddin' gift. Wha gae it her? The hounds that slew *her an' him!* Wuman"—turning to the trembling mother—"thy time has come!"

He had poised himself for the thrust, but was spared the necessity of making it. There was a volley of musketry in the street, and some of the bullets tore through the windows. One of them ended for ever the career of brave Bill Smith, and sent a Whitechapel house into mourning. Another laid the Indian mother low and lifeless, and even "Daft Donald" was touched in the head in a manner that made him spin round like a top, though he did not lose his footing.

There was a queer, numb feeling in his brain. He knelt down beside the woman (who seemed very young and very pretty for her race), and saw she was quite dead. He was interrupted by the child, who looked quite funny in the white cotton shirt that left the little brown legs and feet exposed. The child came crawling over on his hands and knees, and, whimpering strangely, began to poke his pudgy fists into his mother's cheeks and throat.

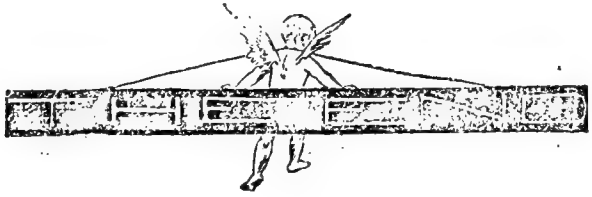
Sergeant Macfarlane reached out stealthily and grasped his sword. He pointed it at the baby breast. The little fellow laughed gaily and patted its shining side in glee. The brown eyes looked curiously into the executioner's blue ones.

Then, methinks, "Daft Donald's" reason must have given way utterly, for he cast the sword far from him, and, grasping the little heathen to his broad breast, began to weep over him hysterically. Then, after this singular proceeding, he began to play peek-a-boo with him over his mother's body. Yes, old Donald was surely "daft" now.

In this silly occupation he was discovered an hour later by three Sepoys, who were seeking a hiding-place in the house. With dazed eyes Sergeant Donald Macfarlane saw the fierce faces and muskets levelled, and had just time to place the heathen baby protectingly behind him when the crash came.

At the instant consciousness was leaving him he felt a little brown hand pushed into his. "Puir bairn! puir bairn!" he murmured, pressing it gently, and so died.

F. H.



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A STUDY IN CHALK.

A MIDDLE-AGED gentleman—either a lunatic or on the point of insanity. After a moment's consideration I decided on the former. His violent gestures, his white passionate face, and the torrent of abuse which poured from his lips were attracting general attention. A small crowd had collected round him on the platform. Neither before nor since, in man or woman, have I witnessed such an incontrollable fit of anger. To make matters worse he had a thousand words to say, and the train was actually gliding out of the station. He shouted, he stormed, he raved. The inspector, suave, polite, imperturbable, accustomed no doubt to the vituperation of frenzied passengers, remained admirably calm under the ordeal, and at the last moment lifted him bodily into our compartment. He was still talking as he made his meteor-like entrance through the doorway.

"Confounded idiot!" he repeated.

"You may say what you like," he shouted, "but I don't believe you and I never shall. You took it by the string. I tell you I saw you. You carried it by the string, and, of course, it broke. You confounded idiot!"

One could see the throat vibrating, the hands clenched, the angry knots standing out on his forehead.

"Confounded idiot!" he repeated, glaring round on his fellow passengers, who were watching him from behind their newspapers aghast at the bitterness of his tone. "He says that he never touched the string. P'r'aps he thinks that it came to pieces by itself just for the fun of the thing. P'r'aps—and now it's spoilt—ruined—the best thing that I ever did—a beautiful drawing—worth £50 at the least—the very least!" and he broke off with a sort of moan.

I looked round the compartment. Everyone was smiling. There is something irresistibly droll about the misfortunes of other people. Something ludicrous about the hopeless condition of a man who has lost his temper and finds no one to vent his ill humour upon. I alone succeeded in maintaining some appearance of gravity.

"It is very annoying," I said stupidly. It seems so unsympathetic to remain silent, although commonplaces sting an injured man like salt in an open wound.

"Annoying!" he shouted, turning round on me. "It's maddening, sir, maddening! What am I do? It was beautiful, although I say it who have no right to—beautiful. I might try for weeks, for ever, and never catch the expression again."

His voice broke. He was evidently unstrung. But it was inexcusable forcing his private affairs on half-a-dozen strangers. And to make matters worse, he was unmistakably English—his light hair, his blue eyes, the strong jaw, with its regular well-shaped teeth, all singled him out as a fellow-countryman. Had he been alone at that moment, however, no doubt he would have taken the windows, and seats, and racks into his confidence.

"The picture was from a sitting, sir—a special sitting," he went on, speaking fast, and still boiling over with rage. "What will the lady say when I arrive? Imagine what a fool I shall look. It is ignominious—horrible. My ticket is so much money thrown away."

His gesture of despair, his pathetic tone, the whole situation was too much for the man opposite. There was an audible laugh, and then someone else gave a guffaw.

I felt angry. My lunatic had perhaps brought it on himself. The louder a child cries the less his nurse pities him. It is silence which betokens a serious injury. So with grief. But there are exceptions. There are certain excitable dispositions which cannot be judged by the ordinary standard. That my lunatic was in genuine distress I was perfectly convinced, and I could have kicked the man opposite with the utmost satisfaction for that ill-timed, ill-mannered laugh. The old gentleman was stung to the quick. He realised for the first time that he was making himself a laughing stock.

"There is a comical side to the affair, of course," he said, with a sudden calm in the angry tempest of his voice. He was perfectly collected now, and the flush which lingered in his cheek was as much of shame as of anger. "I have had a good fit of temper, but it is over now. Heigh ho! And I was so pleased with the picture, too."

Lifting the tissue paper.

As he said, there was a comical side to the adventure, and the comic element was his own rage. One felt instinctively that the ruined portrait was his masterpiece—a portrait of some woman for whose opinion he cared in no ordinary degree. The inspector had taken it by the string, and the string had broken. A drawing in chalk is easily injured, and the sight of his precious work lying face downwards on the dusty plat-

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form had for the moment transformed a respectable middle-aged gentleman into a fiend. No trace of his ungovernable fury was now discernible on the placid face.

My lunatic had taken up his *Pall Mall Gazette*, and was reading it upside down! Every now and then he gave a sharp drawn breath. Once he threw down his paper on the floor and picked it up again. I knew exactly how he felt when I saw this little display. At the first station he jumped out, went to the guard's van, and brought back his precious picture.

"I am not going to inconvenience you, gentlemen," he said in a pleasant voice, "but if I may put it on the seat I shall feel happy."

My lunatic was standing in the middle of the carriage fumbling over a knot in the broken string, and tearing back the paper. All of a sudden a tear fell with a solemn little splash on the back of his hand. I felt a lump rising in my throat, and turned my head away and looked out of the window.

When I glanced round again the knot had come undone; he was tenderly lifting the tissue paper. We all leant forward.

The portrait was that of a lovely fair-haired girl. Just the head and the pretty rounded shoulders drawn with consummate art and skill. For the first moment, however, I saw nothing but the eyes. They thrilled me then; they haunt the galleries of memory now. There was a wondering wistful look in their soft brown lustre, a far away light of spiritual immersement in some ethereal dreamland.

We all looked at it spell-bound, and then one by one my fellow passengers went back to their reading. After all, the damage done by the fall was not great. But the work was ruined to an artist's eye. The colours had been shaken from their places, and here and there a smudge marred the perfection of the outline. On the whole I think my lunatic was relieved. The picture had suffered less than he supposed. It was not ruined. When I alighted a few minutes later he was actually smiling, and pointing out the beauties of a sunset to his fellow passengers.

"We never see these glorious skies with their blood-shot gold and rose and purple in London," he said. "I love the country."

He seemed perfectly happy.

For weeks this little scene lingered in my thoughts. It was one of those trivial incidents in life which make a deep impression on our minds. A story begun and broken off like a novel opened and closed before the finish.

Nearly a year later I was dining with my friend Sclater, journalist, plagiarist, and writer of stories. His rooms in Piccadilly were handsomely furnished with a number of great easy chairs and comfortable lounges, and scores of silver frames and expensive knick-knacks scattered about in every part, and curiosities gathered from the four quarters of the globe.

Dessert was finished. The conversation had drifted into "shop," for Sclater could talk about his profession for hours, and never grow uninteresting.

"Anyone who takes the trouble can learn to write," he observed, in his silvery tones. "Fortunately, this is a fact not generally known, or the world would be so busy writing, that no one would have any time to read." He got up, removed a rose-coloured shade from one of the candles, and bent forward to light a cigarette.

"Observation is of far more value than imagination," he went on, pushing the port across the table, and seating himself again. "My stories which sell best are all lifted bodily from real life!"

"The commonplace is often uncommon," I replied; and my mind went back to that little scene in the railway carriage. When I told Sclater the story, he laughed.

"Would you like to hear the sequel?" he asked, leaning back in his chair and playing with a tiny vase of geraniums with his long, slender fingers.

I nodded.

Sclater rose from his seat and crossed over to the other end of the room. He brought back a photograph in either hand and laid them down on the table in front of me.

"Do you recognise either of those?" he asked.

"Certainly; my lunatic and the girl whose portrait he showed us."

Bent forward to light a cigarette.

"Your lunatic is my father," Sclater observed, very quietly indeed.

"You're joking," I cried.

"Not a bit of it," he replied. "No, don't apologise, please. Not a word. I want to tell you the rest of your story."

He wheeled two chairs round to the fire, pushed back the table a little, and rang the bell for coffee. I sat with one of the photographs on each knee, staring at them, and wondering what was coming next.

"My father has always been as poor as a church mouse," Sclater began in his matter-of-fact way, striking a match on his boot and handing it to me. "He calls himself an artist, but he only once drew anything artistic, and that was the picture you saw. One day a friend came into his studio.

"'Sclater,' he said, 'Do you want a job?'

"'What kind?' said my father. He would have been glad to hold horses if any one had offered him the post.

"'To draw the portrait of a lady. She will give you two sittings and pay your own price.'

"'Her name?'

"'Violet Lyndhurst.'

"Well, my father accepted the commission. An appointment was made, and in due time he went down with his chalks and things to Eastbourne, where the lady lived. She was, as you know from her portrait, and, as you can see from that photograph, young and extremely beautiful. From the first moment that he set eyes upon her he knew that he had met his fate. I think the face reminded him a little of my dear mother's, who died when I was born. It was this fact, perhaps, which inspired his pencil. As he worked he found that a wonderful speaking likeness was springing up at his touch. It is not difficult to imagine the pleasure which this discovery must have been to him. It was this which he had waited and prayed for all his life—a masterpiece at last. A drawing which would hand his name down to fame.

"The thought of the pleasure which this exquisite crayon would give to his beautiful patron transported him into a seventh heaven of delight. What easier way of winning her good graces?

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"At the end of the first sitting Miss Lyndhurst thanked him graciously, but to his surprise she did not ask to see his drawing or show any curiosity about the progress of his work except to ask:

"'Do you think it is like me?'

"He said 'Yes,' and went away a little disappointed at her coldness, but glad on the whole to think that she would not see the picture until it was finished and perfect. His success delighted him. He carried the precious drawing away to work at it in his studio. A week later he set out again."

"Do you think it is like me?"

Sclater stopped to break open a new box of cigars. His servant had brought in the coffee, and he poured out mine and handed it to me.

"Go on," I said breathlessly.

"You know what happened next," he replied, with a little laugh. "This is where you first make the acquaintance of your lunatic. He goes to the station, treading on air. He actually whistles, he feels so gay and happy. There is some mistake about his luggage, and he intrusts the picture for a moment to an inspector. The string comes undone, it slips out of its wrapper on to the platform.

"I am not surprised that you should have mistaken him for a lunatic then. I think even a man of your phlegmatic disposition would have been for a moment off your guard. He had taken such pride in his work, he had been looking forward with such eagerness to receiving his divinity's praise. No doubt he had pictured to himself the moment when she would throw up her hands in delight; he could see her standing over his work, pleased, happy, delighted, and, best of all, grateful to him. A word of praise from her, a smile, a look of pleasure would have been the sweetest thing in the world that he could have.

"And now it was all over. The picture lay on its face in the dust. This was the end of all his hopes and his dreams. He had looked forward in a vague and uncertain way to her surprise and enjoyment of his wonderful work. One can imagine the bitterness of his disappointment, and what a blow it must have been to his ambition."

Sclater stopped to light his cigar afresh.

"Never mind your cigar," I almost shouted; "get on with the story."

He leant forward, poking the fire into a blaze.

"The poor old governor!" he said to himself. "It is a curious story," he continued reflectively; "a very strange story. You can imagine how furious he was. Of course, he might have begun over again; but the chances were, as he told you, that he would never succeed so well a second time. Sometimes one does in five minutes what a year would not be long enough to do again."

"But the picture was not really spoilt?"

"It was not so much damaged as he supposed. By degrees he regained his spirits. It was still possible to make the portrait beautiful. He found Miss Lyndhurst already in her chair when he arrived.

"'Good-morning,' she said, looking up with a bright smile as he entered; 'I have been looking forward to your visit. Do you think it will be beautiful? Tell me.'

"'I hope so,' he answered simply.

"Then he set to work, and all the time he was thinking:

"'Will she be pleased with it? Will *she* think it beautiful?'

"A sort of fever came over him. He felt his cheeks burning, and sometimes his hands trembled so with excitement that he could hardly hold the colours.

"'Will *she* think it beautiful?'

"'Suppose, after all, she was not pleased—suppose——'

"He would not listen to such thoughts.

"Minutes flew by, and hours, and still he worked on.

"How sweet the permission seemed to stand there, drinking in her beauty. By now he knew every line of the beautiful face by heart. On, on, in frantic haste.

"'What will she think of it?' he kept on saying to himself. He wanted to stop and show it to her. But, no. He must wait until it was finished.

"At last he threw down his pencil.

"Now the time came he felt as if the strain was more than is good for a man to bear. He could hear his heart beating, and the perspiration stood out on his forehead. He lifted it from the easel and brought it round to where his model was sitting. A beautiful smile shone in her face.

"'What do you think of it?' he asked. His voice sounded odd and husky. 'I have done my best;' and he bowed his head a little.

"He felt her hand laid on his arm.

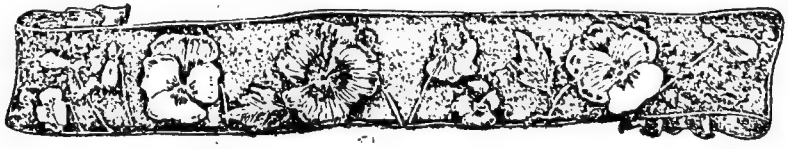
"'Do you not know, sir,' she said, in a calm silvery voice. 'Did they not tell you that *I am blind?*'"

* * * * * *

Sclater pushed back his chair. I, too, rose to my feet. He took one of the photographs from my hands and kissed it.

"I am proud of my little step-mother," he said. "You must come and dine with my people some day and meet her yourself."

W. A. W.



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A Woman of To-Morrow.

To ascend Duncombe Hill, even at a slow pace, requires the exercise of a certain amount of energy, and Miss Lilian Kennedy had gained the summit—starting from the little footbridge which spanned the small stream in the valley beneath—in less than half an hour, which would have been considered good walking for many a man.

No wonder then that she was somewhat heated with her exertions, and turning round, so as to let the cooling wind play upon her face, she took off her hat and drank in with evident delight the bracing air for which the well-known eminence is so justly famed.

Far away as the eye could reach was a tract of wild, desolate moorland, with here and there in the valley beneath and the sides of the hill she had just mounted cosy-looking farmhouses, some with a few hundred acres of cultivated land attached; others with merely a few fields, and then tracts of common, on which the gorse bloomed luxuriantly. It was, in fact, what is called in England a poor farming district, where everyone was poor and the hardest work meant only the meanest living.

Had her thoughts been bared for inspection it would have been found that they ran on the utter hopelessness of existing under such conditions, and it was the impossibility of so doing that was at the moment exercising the mind of Lilian Kennedy.

Standing there in all the pride of her young womanhood, it seemed to her impossible that any human being in his or her senses could voluntarily bury themselves in such obscurity, and yet a year or two ago she would have thought very differently. Then, indeed, to have lived in the peaceful valley beneath, caring nought for the doings of the big world beyond, but happy and content in the Arcadian existence of the fields and woods, would have been sufficient for her; but the last two years had wrought a wonderful change.

A course of education at a woman's college, at which she had become imbued with other ideas than the mere acquirement of knowledge, and had been led away by the desire for emancipation from the thraldom pertaining to her sex, had transformed her from a lovable girl into an ambitious woman, anxious to take her place in the race of life; to strive for, and happily to obtain, eminence in one or other of the learned professions, and to work out a career for herself. In fact, to be a woman of the future rather than a nonentity of the present, only fit to be made love to, courted, and married; to sink her identity and her very name in that of the man who should make her his wife.

And now at length her dream of ambition was about to be fulfilled, for she had worked hard at college, and come out high up in the list of honours. For a time she had been undecided as to what profession to enter; then she had settled on going in for medicine. At college she had spared no time or pains to do well in her final examination, and to-day, less than two hours ago, the announcement had come that she had passed—and passed well, too—and that, henceforth, she was entitled to style herself:

LILIAN KENNEDY, M.D.

The mystic letters had an irresistible attraction for her. They spoke of hard work, of ambition, and of prejudice triumphantly trodden under foot.

Woman's mission in life, she had been heard to declare, was to alleviate suffering, and how could she do this more successfully than by practising as a doctor?

Standing there against the sky-line, with her erect figure and her head thrown proudly back, the idea filled her with satisfaction. A great responsibility had fallen upon her, and she would do her best to act up to it.

She turned and her glance wandered away down the hillside until it rested upon the gabled roof of a picturesque old house, a farmhouse apparently, but of a better stamp than others in the vicinity.

This was Fairfax Place, and Lilian knew it well; many a time had she spent pleasant evenings there in her unambitious days, and the house and its inmates were alike well known to her.

Of the latter there were three—Mrs. Fairfax, her daughter, and a son.

Idly Lilian watched the thin line of smoke curling lazily along the hillside.

She knew whose hands had lighted that fire. Gentle, ladylike hands they were—white and ringless, with delicate wrinkles where the dimples had been once.

They were young hands, too. Hannah Fairfax was not more than thirty; but her youth and dimples had waned long ago. There had been much work and few servants at any time, and now the household had been still further reduced, so the gentle, lady-like hands had had to do their share. True, there had been a liberal application of mutton suet, and gloves had been drawn on—but the work was none the less light because it was done in gloves; perhaps the heavier.

There was something about Hannah Fairfax that repelled Lilian. Perhaps the timidity of her manner, perhaps the weakness and whiteness of her hands, that seemed half-ashamed of their honest labour, as if anyone need be ashamed of honest toil!

She was a pretty creature, with tired brown eyes and a fringe of carefully curled hair above her forehead.

Lilian wondered why she took the trouble to curl it—why she didn't brush it back and forget to put the frilling of lace in her collar. If she would only forget it once Lilian might forgive her. But the hopeless air of dressiness baffled the younger woman.

Once, indeed, she had met her by chance coming from the well with a water-bucket in her hand. Then she had worn a faded cotton wrapper, and her hands were in gloves, but the curls were there, and a dainty covering of powder protected her skin from the sun.

At sight of Lilian she had started and fallen back, a deep flush showing beneath the powder on her face, her tired eyes growing hurt and appealing.

"One of our servants is ill to-day," she had said deprecatingly, and Lilian had been stung by the polite lie. In one moment she had loved and hated the woman before her—loved her for her strength to labour and her beautiful pride—hated her for the appealing blush and the shame-faced little lie.

Why should she be ashamed of the truth—she, living in the twentieth century—when honest labour is more than a luxury, and strong hands above white ones?

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Then, from thinking of the sister, Lilian passed to thinking of the brother.

She could fancy him returning from the fields, where he had been doing his share of work, his broad shoulders erect, his eyes glowing beneath his harvest hat.

She knew his story, as everyone about the place knew it. He had been to college, and was starting out into the world, when his mother had called him home. In response to a selfish whim of the gentle old lady he had come. "You must stay by me," she had said, "and by the old place; it's the only way to save it."

And he had stayed.

"Ah!" cried Lilian bitterly. She flung out her hands with a gesture almost of despair, a hot red blush mantling her face. "It is not just! It is not just! He might have done so much—so much—and now."

Suddenly she straightened herself and stood up, her black skirt clinging closely about her, her arms hanging loosely at her sides. From the open collar of her dress her white throat showed its sensitive lines. Her hat was still in her hand, and the heavy coil of hair had slipped low on her splendid head. She was thrilled with life—a superb specimen of health and strength, capable of passion and of action. She turned and descended the winding path which she had but lately come up.

At the end of the path, just where it passed into the roadway, ran a small sluggish stream. A wooden bridge ran across it. Lilian paused, her face showing white in the grey dusk.

She leant over the stream, seeing in its shallow water a faint caricature of her sensitive face.

Then she drew back.

"Lilian!"

Someone came from out of the dusty turnpike and faced her, standing upon the further end of the bridge. With a sudden tremor she recognised him. His eyes glowed beneath the brim of his straw hat, his strong hand was outstretched. There was a sudden stirring in her pulses, a vague sense of exaltation.

She gave him her hand. Then, with a sudden gesture, she threw back her head and looked into his eyes.

"I was thinking of you," she said.

"Of me?"

"Yes. I was thinking of the shame of it—of the pity of it. Have you no ambition? Are you utterly without manhood that you are content to waste your life like this?—that you let the world go by without a care, preferring to spend your youth upon a worn-out farm, tilling a worn-out soil? Ah, the shame of it!"

Her hot, reproachful eyes flashed over him. Beneath the fire of her words he wavered and trembled. The glow died from his face. It looked white and set through the grey gloom.

"Don't you see," he said appealingly, "it is a question of duty? My post is here; I cannot desert it. I owe it to my family—to my mother. Don't you see, if the old place were sold it would kill her?"

But she turned away with a little hopeless gesture.

"I don't see," she said coldly. "I could never see! It is absurd! It is a remnant of that old chivalry—so-called—of which the world is well rid."

Then her mood melted. She turned to him with sweet, prayerful eyes, stretching out appealing hands.

"Oh, go away!" she cried. "Go out into the world. You owe it to yourself. Success is so dear—so dear. Why shouldn't you know it?"

He took her hands, his warm, rapt gaze still bent upon her. "I love you," he said. "You know that I love you—love you well enough to sacrifice everything for you—everything! Love you so that the hardest life with you would be heaven!"

The girl did not tremble, did not run away. She looked at him steadily, her proud lips slightly apart.

"Well enough to leave this place for me—to come away and work and earn success for me—well enough for that?" Her voice was almost mocking in its earnestness.

"Can't you understand?" he cried. "Can you never understand? My mother needs me. I am her only son. It is duty—plain, practical duty. Will you yield nothing to that?" Then he grew yearningly tender.

"Ah, my love! my love!" he said. "Am I nothing to you? Is your love so weak? Can you not sacrifice something for me? Come to me here—here for a while—perhaps ten, perhaps twenty years. I am bound hand and foot, but you—you are free. Be a woman, Lilian; give yourself to me. It will not be hard; and there is love. What is the world? what is anything to love?"

Then she wavered.

"Not hard!" she cried passionately. "Not hard! Ah, it is a hard, hard thing to be a woman!"

With a desperate movement she broke from him, and fled along the road.

Once in her room the sense of oppression became unbearable. She went over to the window and, kneeling beside it, laid her hot cheek against the sill. All was dark and quiet, save for a faint stir in the room below, and a little stream of light cast from an open window upon the gravel path. To her right the big hill-top stood like a phantom sentinel guarding futurity.

"I cannot bear it!" cried Lilian; "I cannot bear it!"

Then the question rose and faced her blankly. It was a moment of supreme indecision. On one side all the womanhood within her asserted itself; on the other, a man's ambitions struggled to survive. It was the new woman warring against the old—the twentieth century rebelling against the nineteenth.

"Love is not for you," said Reason. But Reason was checkmated. Her womanly nature pinned it down.

"I love him! I love him!" she cried, "and I must have him!"

Yes; she would come to him, as he had said. She would become a woman for his sake, suffer as other women suffer, be patient as other women were patient. She would merge her identity into his, and, letting the world go by, think only of him and his child, as it lay upon her breast. She would give up her profession, she would let ambition go. She would—yes, she would, if necessary, do the housework in gloves, like Hannah Fairfax, and churn the butter. She saw herself growing old and wrinkled, saw the faded calico wrapper, and all the rest.

"Ah!" cried she suddenly, "what a life! what a life!"

She rested her head upon her arm, still kneeling beside the window. A luxuriant wisteria vine, that grew without, peeped shyly in at her, its purple blossoms just brushing her cheek. She looked across the hill far into the distance. The freshness of twilight came stealing in upon her, mingling with the faint odour of purple wisteria.

In the road beneath a well set-up man was moving along. She raised her head and leant far out, straining her eyes to catch the last outlines of his straight figure as it vanished beyond the stile.

"Ah!" said Lilian again, and left the window.

That night Lilian wrote a letter.

"You have asked me to decide," it said, "but I can-

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not. Love is stronger than I, but is love as strong as ambition? I do not know. Time will decide. I am going away. Do not follow me, do not seek to find me. You say you love me; then you must bear with me. Love will last. If I want you I will come back to you; if not—my life must be lived, and as yet my life means my work.

"You may not understand, for the women of to-day are different from the women you know—the women you have read of. In the nineteenth century a woman would have stayed; in the twentieth she must go."

And the next morning at daybreak she was driven to the little station. As she passed Fairfax Place her eyes sought eagerly for some trace of life. The house was dark and still. The shutters were tightly closed.

Then, as she looked, a figure appeared in the narrow path leading from the pasture—a figure in a faded cotton gown, with a milk pail in her small hand.

"Ah, what a life!" cried Lilian breathlessly.

Then the vehicle jogged along, and the figure was lost in the foggy distance.

* * * * *

Ten years later a woman sat alone in her consulting room—a tall woman with a beautiful dark head.

She was sitting before a small desk, upon which some loose papers were scattered, in her hand she held *The Lancet*, in which was a powerful essay of her own.

The woman leant her head upon her hand and looked thoughtfully through the open window.

Along the street people were passing hurriedly.

In the next street a hand-organ was grinding out a discordant air, the tune of an old-fashioned polka. She breathed quickly, pushing the hair from her brow as she did so with a firm, white hand. A letter lay upon the floor at her feet. Suddenly her eyes lowered, meeting the written lines.

"Your name has been suggested," it said, "in connection with the presidency of——"

She frowned and placed her foot upon it with a half-displeased gesture.

"So I may become the head of one of our greatest institutions," she said. "And—I am tired."

For a moment she was silent. People still passed hurriedly in the street. The hand-organ was moving farther away; its air grew fainter. Suddenly a baby's cry sounded fitfully without. Her gaze reached the window. A beggar woman had stopped, her shawl blown in the wind, and upon her breast a child.

The woman on the inside leant forward. A little cry escaped her; all the wonderful instinct of motherhood, which is strong in proportion to the weakness of women, swelled within her. There was a passionate leaping of her pulses. She longed to tear the child from the woman's breast—to feel its soft lips against her own. The letter lay trampled underfoot. Suddenly she spoke:

"My God!" she said, "what have I missed?"

The firm, flexible mouth softened.

"Oh, to know what it means," she cried. "To have one word, ever so little, only to know what his life had been—his life and mine—and mine. I would not change it," she cried. "I would not change it. And yet—and yet——"

She rose suddenly, some loose sheets of paper fluttering to the ground. She stretched out her arms with a wide, free movement.

"I will go to the old place to-day," she said.

As the sun was setting she stepped from the train at the little station, and walked rapidly across the field. She felt strangely restless. Now that the journey was ended, the vague impulse that had prompted her to undertake it seemed to fail her. By the act she seemed to have put the ten long years aside—to have come back to her girlhood—to Nature in its free, primitive state.

Once again she paused upon the hillside, resting her arms upon the bridge—an iron structure had taken the place of the old one—her gaze sweeping the fields and resting upon the gabled roof of a house above her. A warm colour had risen to her cheeks, and her eyes had dimmed and softened.

For a moment she wavered; then, with a firm step, she followed the winding path.

The house was quiet. From the kitchen chimney smoke was rising.

Then a man came quickly from the garden and stood in the gravelled path. In one moment the past came back to her. At first she saw only the aggressive manliness—all the straight length of him. Her womanhood had asserted itself after ten years of sexless suppression.

She went towards him, one hand outstretched, a heightened colour tinging her cheeks.

Then, as she neared him, her eyes cleared. Looking upon him, she saw that the years had passed him as they had passed the old place. She saw that his bronzed face had reddened and roughened, that the glow had left his eyes—saw that they were dull and content, as he was content. The direction in which she had progressed he did not know; he had taken no step forward for ten long years.

With a little gasp she met his outstretched hand, looking into his face—looking for something which she had not found, and could not find—something which was not and had never been.

"Lilian!" There was a pathetic awkwardness in his speech. "Lilian—I—I never thought that you would come back."

Then suddenly their hands fell apart and they stood silent, for a woman had come from behind the house and neared them—a small, tired woman in a soiled gown, with a child upon her breast—a woman who had borne many burdens, and whose strength had not been sufficient unto her need.

The man wavered.

"I—I never thought that you would come back," he repeated, "and—and this is my wife."

* * * * *

A while later, and Lilian walked rapidly away. She no longer felt a stirring of her pulse. The warm red had faded from her face. It looked white and set.

At the top of the hill she halted and looked about her, drawing a long, quiet breath. She saw with clear eyes the landscape. She saw the wild, rough land. She saw the distant moor. She saw the sun, a fiery ball, setting beyond their summits, flooding the hollow below with a roseate glow. The grey fog had not risen, softening the prospect. She saw it as it was, ragged and barren. And looking inward, she saw her own life, with its strong, bold lines unaltered. The old romance had fallen from her like a shadow, melting from her feet and passing to take its place among the many shadows that stood flanked within the past.

The woman held her head erect; not a muscle quivered. She stretched out her arms with a gesture of thankfulness.

"Oh, thank God!" she said, "thank God!"

Then the great head fell upon her arms, and she burst into tears.

And the sun went down.

PETER PARR.

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The Prisoner at the Bar.

Manslaughter is an ugly crime, and of such a crime the prisoner at the bar—he gave his name as Saul Wray—was accused. An unfortunate countryman had been found dead by the roadside, bearing unmistakable marks of rough handling. Saul Wray had been last seen in his company, both men drinking heavily and quarrelling at frequent intervals. Late at night the two boon companions staggered from the tavern along the road, where one of them was found killed the next morning.

The other was afterwards discovered sleeping under a haystack, his hands covered with blood, his face cut and bruised, his jacket torn down the front. The gaol soon had him within its walls, charged with the committal of the crime; and the good folks of the village were on the tip-toe of excitement until the day of the trial arrived. The murdered man was a dissolute, idle character, well-known in the place, and there was but scant sympathy for his untimely end. Wray was a stranger to the place, and was apparently a tramp.

In due course the Assizes came on, and Saul Wray stood arraigned before a jury of his countrymen.

Judge Grayson, who was trying the case, was a well-known jurist of considerable eminence, and had a reputation for strict impartiality. The court was crowded when the case began, and many eyes were directed on the prisoner, who, it was noticed by some particularly observant individuals, seemed considerably startled on seeing Judge Grayson take his seat on the bench. A strange gleam come into his eyes, while an unearthly pallor crept over his swarthy countenance.

In a low tone he pleaded "Not Guilty!"

Of course, the evidence was purely circumstantial, but, nevertheless, sufficiently weighty to remove any doubts which might have existed regarding the prisoner's guilt.

There was a solemn hush in the court as the Crown Prosecutor rose to his feet and prepared to address the jury.

The prisoner leant over the rail in front of the dock, still with his eyes fixed, not on the speaker, but on the Judge, who leant back in his seat, and with his hands loosely clasped in his lap, his eyes half closed, listened attentively to counsel's speech. Occasionally his lordship opened and closed his fingers or toyed with his thumbs abstractedly, but the prisoner at the bar did not move a muscle or alter his keen, curious gaze.

He was an uncouth-looking individual.

Tall and loosely built, there was a certain slouch in his attitude that bespoke the genus "loafer." He had a swarthy sunburnt face, the lower portion of which was entirely concealed by rough tufts of tawny beard and whiskers, shaggy and unkempt; his high massive forehead was crowned with iron-grey hair, which looked as if a comb were altogether a stranger to it.

His teeth were firmly clenched; he breathed heavily; his eyes glowed with a weird light as they remained fastened on the face of the Judge, who evidently did not notice the fixity of their gaze. One hand of the prisoner was tightly grasping the rail in front of him, the other was thrust into the breast of his coat.

It was easy to forecast the verdict when the Crown Prosecutor sat down after speaking for just half an hour. The jury had their minds made up.

When Judge Grayson directed them to retire and consider their verdict, the foreman got up hurriedly and intimated that they had already arrived at a decision.

"We find the prisoner guilty, me lord."

All eyes now centred on the prisoner, who drew a long breath as the Judge turned towards him, and, in clear tones, asked if he desired to say anything before judgment was pronounced.

Paul Wray started, his eyes gleaming with living intensity; he drew himself up to his full height, crossing his arms on his breast. There was a breathless pause, and then there came but one word from the clenched teeth of the prisoner at the bar:

"Brother!"

Judge Grayson started violently, opening his keen grey eyes full on the speaker, his face paling, his hands tightly clasping the arms of his chair.

"Brother William!"

Judge Grayson half rose to his feet, with an exclamation of mingled horror and surprise, then sank back in his seat, trembling visibly.

In deep tones the prisoner at the bar spoke to him:

"You do not recognise me, Brother William, and I do not wonder, for it would be hard indeed to know me now, so changed am I from that brother who left you years ago to seek his fortune in Australia. Yes, William Grayson, I am your brother Paul. I went to the bad long ago. I am at the end of my tether now. I do not ask your sympathy. I do not deserve it. Do with me as you will."

There was a low, indefinite murmur in the crowded court as he stopped and bowed his head, as if evoking judgment.

Pitying eyes turned on the judge, who appeared crushed by the shock of the revelation, and the Crown Prosecutor started up himself as if about to speak.

Judge Grayson motioned him to desist, and rose to his feet, leaning heavily on the table in front of him. His face was white, his features drawn; his lips moved several times before speech came from them.

"Prisoner at the bar——"

He stopped short, and drew his hand sharply across his eyes, then went on abruptly:

"You have been tried and found guilty of a most grave crime. The evidence against you has fully convinced me of your guilt. The jury, by their verdict, have endorsed that evidence and strengthened my conviction. I have, therefore, no course open to me but to sentence you to penal servitude for the natural term of your life."

Paul Grayson lifted his head with a start of incredulity.

Judge William Grayson met his questioning glance with a look of intense pain, and murmured in an almost inaudible tone:

"Brother, forgive me!"

He drew himself up with an effort, and motioned to the constables to remove the condemned man.

Just one moment of deep silence in court; then there was a heavy thud on the raised daïs, and a horrified cry from the breathless crowd as the prisoner was removed from the dock.

Judge Grayson had fallen senseless.

Annie Davis.

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FOR LOVE'S SAKE

I.

Mr. Langham, of Grindelthorpe, sat alone in his snuggery and listened to the wind. It raged furiously in the chimney-stacks; it shrieked, it wailed, it drove the snow into drifts in the surrounding meadows and on the high road. He listened to it with a certain pleasure, for it reminded him of days long gone by, when he was young, and the world looked brighter than it did now.

Langham sat in a large cushioned chair, his feet resting on the skin of a grizzly bear, with the head and claws attached, and the divan in the corner was covered with deerskins; there were innumerable curiosities and trophies of arrows, and a scalping knife, an old rifle, looking as if it had seen much service, a portentous bowie knife, an array of stock whips (Langham had made his money on a cattle ranche in America), and coiled around the Indian trophies on the wall, and making a sort of frame for them, a black snake whip, its long shiny thong bearing some resemblance to the reptile after which it was called.

Langham gazed meditatively into the fire. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with grizzled hair and beard, hard-featured and weather-beaten, with a square, determined jaw, very keen eyes, and imperturbable manner; he held a pipe in his hand, which he had apparently taken to refill and had forgotten. He was alone in the world, and through no fault of his own; his daughter Amy had been the apple of his eye.

Two years and a half ago she had married clandestinely, and, worse still, she had married a scamp, and for two years he had heard nothing of her. Her husband, by name Jack Kelly, was the son of a wealthy tradesman in the neighbouring town. She was nineteen when she married him, and he near twenty-four; handsome enough to please the eye of most girls, but "handsome is that handsome does," and Kelly's doings were unhandsome. He was deeply in debt, he was a gambler, and he not infrequently drank; he promised amendment to Amy, and for six months after the marriage he kept his word. At the end of six months, however, Kelly fell in with some boon companions after the horse fair, got drunk, was mixed up in a street row, knocked down a policeman, and was locked up for the night. He was fined, of course, with the option of fourteen days' imprisonment; his father paid the fine, which was the heaviest that could be imposed, and turned him then and there out of his house. He had paid Jack's debts twice, he was now past his patience; he altered his will, and when he died three months later his money went almost entirely to local charities, and his son did not even receive the proverbial shilling.

Amy no sooner heard the news of her husband's conduct than she wrote bidding Kelly claim her at once, and take her with him when he left the place to seek his fortune. She informed her father of her marriage. It was a heavy blow to Langham. He said little, however. He saw Kelly, and told him that he would never receive him as a son-in-law. If he chose to go away and never molest his wife in any way, he would forgive Amy her deception.

"Mr. Langham," Kelly had said, "that's for Amy to decide. If she chooses to forbid me to see her I shan't claim her against her will. I may not be a very creditable member of society, but I'm not the man to drag a woman away with me against her will because the law gives me power to do it."

Langham turned inquiringly to his daughter. Amy was a slender little creature, with a soft, fair face, and tender brown eyes. She had a peculiarly quiet, gentle manner.

"Father," she had said, "you are right to be vexed with me. I've been very wrong, ungrateful, and deceitful to you, but I hoped it would turn out differently." She held out her hand to her husband. "You broke your word to me, Jack," she said; "you promised you wouldn't do so again; but, unless I'm a burden to you, I promised to stand by you till one or other of us die; I love you, and I'll go with you." So Amy and Jack Kelly left Grindelthorpe, and Langham had heard nothing of them since.

II.

Langham rose with a sigh, and began to refill the empty pipe, when a knock—a sharp, decided knock—came to the door opening into the room. He laid down the pipe, drew aside the curtains, shot back the bolts, and opened the door; the wind burst in with a shriek, blowing with it a cloud of snow; in the doorway stood the figure of a man, carrying in his arms the form of an insensible woman.

"Mr. Langham," said the voice of Kelly, "will you let me speak to you?"

"No," said Langham shortly, "I won't; it's like your impudence to come here. You and Amy have chosen your own road; take it, and leave me to go mine."

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"For mercy's sake, hear me," said the other, "unless you want to see your daughter's dead body lying on your threshold to-morrow. I don't come here to plead for myself."

"I'll hear you," said Langham very quietly, "if you'll be brief."

"Let me come in," said Kelly panting.

"Come in," said Langham, and Kelly entered. His eyes were hollow, he looked poor and shabbily dressed, his hat had been blown away by the raging wind, the snow lay on his hair and melted there. Amy, totally unconscious, lay in his arms; her little figure looked slenderer than ever, she was very poorly and thinly clad, her face was wan and shrunken; her pretty soft hair, loosened by the wind, streamed over her husband's shoulder; he put her gently in the chair by the fire.

Langham resolutely averted his eyes from his daughter. "Now, Mr. Kelly," said he, as he closed the door, "you promised to be brief."

"I've come to ask you," said Kelly, "to forgive Amy and take her home; I told her we would plead to you for both of us, but I only ask you to be good to her. I can't stand seeing her suffer—the best, the bravest, the truest little wife that ever a man had; she's never reproached me once, Mr. Langham. I haven't touched anything stronger than water since I left here, and I haven't touched a card—upon my soul I haven't. We did all right for the first year—I got work in a factory, and we were happy, and we saved, or she did, but she was very ill when—when the child was born, and it died, and she fretted terribly; and then I broke my arm and couldn't work, and our money went, and trade was bad, and they discharged a lot of the hands, and we've been going down hill ever since. Take her home, and I'll go away, and I won't trouble her again unless I'm in a position to keep her in comfort."

"You're tired of her, I fancy," said Langham, "that's about it; how do I know you've really turned over a new leaf. You've married my girl, and you must abide by your bargain."

"You won't forgive her?" said Kelly.

"No," said Langham, "I won't."

"Great Heaven," cried the other, "what shall I do?"

Langham opened the door. "Why," said he, "I think you'd better continue your journey."

"She'll die," cried Kelly, "before I can get her to shelter."

"The workhouse is three miles ahead," said Langham drily.

"The workhouse?" cried the other. "Great Heavens, man, she'll die before I can get her there, in the dark and in this wind, and the drifts up to one's waist. Look at her, the poor little girl, as frail and slender as a child. It's murder; give her shelter for to-night. Save her life; I'll walk on. I'll claim her to-morrow; if I don't, turn her out. Keep her here to-night, for pity's sake."

"You're wasting your breath," said Langham carelessly.

"Then shame upon you," cried Kelly angrily. "Poor Amy's crime is only that she loved a blackguard too well to turn her back on him when everyone else did. She kept her marriage from you for a time, true, but is that a sin to deserve death? I tell you, you'll kill her as surely as if you stabbed her to the heart. It's certain death. She's nearly dead now, my poor little wife. God help us both. What can I do? Heaven knows, I'd be cut to pieces if that would save her. But I am helpless, and you'll not stir hand or foot to save the life of your own child."

Langham looked at him and became meditative. "You've an uncommonly fluent tongue, young man," he said, quietly and reflectively. "It's easy to say you'd do that or you'd do this. You'd change your tune if you were put to the test. I'll try you. Will you save your wife's life? Will you pay for her night's shelter?"

"You're mocking me," said Kelly, "you know I've not a cent in the world, or I shouldn't be here to-night."

"Who said you had?" retorted Langham. "I said, would you pay. I didn't name the price."

"What do you mean?" said Kelly.

Langham turned and drew the thong of the black snake from the wall, and flung it on the table.

"That's what I mean," said he, "do you love your wife well enough to take fifty lashes from that, if I give her food and shelter for the night?"

Kelly started, the blood rushed to his face, and faded, leaving him deadly white.

"Do you mean it?" he asked.

"I do," said Langham; "those are my terms; that's the price you must pay for Amy's life."

"What possible motive can you have?" said the other.

"Perhaps I want to make her a widow," said Langham. "I think I could finish you with that, once I started; no one knows you're here; I might shovel you out of the way before morning and tell the girl you've deserted her. Perhaps I hate you and want to pay you out; my motives don't concern you, and I shan't give them; it's a pure matter of business. I tell you my terms for saving Amy's life—take them or leave them."

He spoke with perfect coolness as though proposing the most ordinary business transaction in the world.

Kelly hesitated. He took a step forward and looked at Amy's white, shrunken little face; he looked at the long shiny thong on the table; he looked at Langham's impassive face; he was silent.

"You funk it," said Langham; "I don't blame you; most people would shrink from certain tortures and possible or probable death, only you see you talked so mighty big about being cut to pieces to save your wife's life, I thought I'd see just about how much all that tall talk amounted to."

"Stop," said Kelly. "If I accept your terms, of course your motive is to kill me and get rid of me, though why you shouldn't choose a more merciful way of setting about it is more than I can say; however, if I accept and am killed, what about Amy? Am I to pay for one night's lodging with my life, or will you be kind to her and provide for her?"

"I will," answered Langham in the most matter-of-fact tones, "if you're killed; but I fancy you won't be; you look pretty strong. I'll look after her if you can't, anyhow."

"Then," said Kelly slowly, "I accept your terms."

"Don't run into this with your eyes shut," said Langham, "this won't be called child's play; you'll not walk three miles after I've done with you, nor yet three yards, nor half a yard."

"You'll find a snowdrift to throw me into somewhere handy, I don't doubt," said Kelly bitterly. "I don't suppose I shall feel the cold much or anything else when you've done with me, as you call it; you'll take care of that. The snow will do till the ground gets soft enough to dig. Be kind to Amy, that's all—you'll owe me *that*, I think, whatever I've done or left undone."

"A bargain?" said Langham unmoved.

"A bargain," was the answer; "do *your* share and

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I'll not shrink from mine." Kelly spoke firmly, but could not quite emulate the other's coolness; the muscles of his mouth twitched.

Langham walked to the door and opened it. "Here," he called, "Hannah!"

A girl came along the passage. "Did you call, sir?" said she.

"Yes," said Langham, lifting Amy from the chair, and speaking very slowly and distinctly:

"This lady is my daughter; take care of her—every possible care—d'you hear? Light a fire upstairs, put her to bed, get her all she wants; when she comes to tell her she's perfectly safe and at home; if she asks for her husband say he's with me, and I'll see her presently."

"Stop," said Kelly huskily, "let me kiss her." He kissed her twice, and drew one of her soft tresses through his hand; then Langham gave her to the girl and closed the door.

"Ready?" he said.

"Quite," said Kelly.

III.

Langham threw the yard door wide open, he took the black snake from the table and curled it round his arm; he stepped into the yard, Kelly followed; the wind raged, the drifting snow flew in their faces in blinding masses. Langham opened the barn door, closed it against the bitter blast, struck a match, and kindled a stable lantern. Kelly leant against the closed door; his eyes were perfectly clear and fearless, but his lips were blue. Langham picked up a rope and fastened it to a beam just above their heads; then he turned to the other:

"Sure you don't want to be off your bargain?" he said: "it's not too late yet; you'd better see what these things can do where a man knows how to use them." He sent the long, lithe black line whirling round his head, and brought it against the side of the barn; the barn was rather old, and the wood a little soft, and the splinters of wood flew in Kelly's face.

He bit his lip and gave a faint laugh; his voice was quite steady, but in his eye was despair: "It strikes me," said he, "you'll have Amy on your hands for life; I suppose you wish that, and you probably reconcile the murder of a black sheep like myself to your conscience. Never mind, I'll forgive you, so long as you're good to my little wife—God bless her, and may He so deal with you as you deal with her."

Langham calmly hung the lantern on a nail. "If you're ready, I am," he said.

"One minute," said the other. "I don't know in the least how much endurance I have, or whether I shall funk this or not when it comes to the point; but look here, whatever I say after you've tied me up there don't you turn Amy out. I—I mean, if I *do* funk and ask you to take me down, don't listen to me. I seal this bargain *now*, you see, while I know what I'm about; don't take any notice of what I say afterwards."

Langham looked at him with a curious expression in his keen eyes. "Well, I'll be hanged," he said to himself. "Right you are."

Kelly threw off his coat, and unfastened the throat of his shirt.

Langham caught his arm. "You may have lied about having turned over a new leaf, but you've got grit," said he. "What you say about the last two years may be true, or it mayn't; but if a fellow who's as plucky and as unselfish as you are, and who loves his wife as you do my girl, hasn't got *some* good about him, I'll be shot—it's worth looking for, anyway. I only did this to try you."

"I thought you meant it," faltered Kelly; "didn't you?"

"Of course not," said the other, grinning sardonically; "do you take me for a murderer, you silly fellow?"

Kelly reeled, and dropped like a stone—fainting. When he recovered he found himself lying on the hay, and Langham kneeling by his side dashing the melted snow in his face to revive him.

"Forgive me, Kelly," he said kindly. "I know it was rather a brutal trick to play you; my heart smote me once or twice, and that's the truth, and I nearly laughed now and again, you were in such deadly earnest, but I wanted to see if you really would face a horrible death to save Amy's life."

Kelly laughed rather unsteadily. He had suffered so intensely during the past half-hour he could not treat the thing as coolly as did Langham.

"You are a great actor, Mr. Langham," said he; "I could have sworn you meant it. Will you keep Amy here to-night? Thank you. I'll go on now; is it straight ahead?"

"What I'll do for one I'll do for the other," said Langham; "come along. What an infernal wind." He slipped his arm through the young man's and led him to the house. He called the girl.

"How's my daughter now?" said he.

"She's better, sir," said the girl; "she's in bed, sir; and she's come to ask for where the gentleman was, sir. I've made her some arrowroot, and she's taking it."

"All right," said Langham. "Tell Jane to look sharp with supper, and lay a plate for Mr. Kelly."

Kelly had sat down by the fire; he seemed half dazed, and leant his head on his hand. Langham silently handed him a pipe—his own panacea for every earthly ill—and tossed his tobacco pouch to his son-in-law. Neither spoke till supper was announced.

"I suppose I must forgive the pair of you," said Langham, rising "and find *you* something to do at the mills. If you get up to your old games, it's only giving you the sack; but I fancy you won't—anyhow, we'll try. Come to supper, Jack. Shake hands; we're friends, thanks to the Black Snake."

Mary Bryan.

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The Queen of Night

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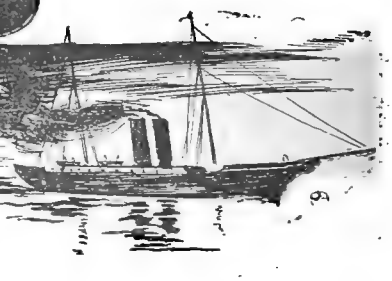

By HEADON HILL,
(*Author of "Guilty Gold," "Zambra the Detective," "The Rajah's Second Wife," etc., etc.*)

SUMMARY.

Gaston Vizard gives Sir Simon Crawshay an introduction to the agent of the vessel *Queen of Night*, in order that he may make a "special arrangement" with regard to the trip of his wealthy ward, Miss Challenor.

Dr. Zavertal calls on Vizard, and reports on the latest trip of the *Queen of Night*, during which the lives of three passengers, who were taken on board with a "special arrangement," had been lost. He also informs Vizard that a new captain will be wanted before the next cruise.

In Chapter I. Cyril Forrester receives his dismissal from the Flower Steamship Company for breaking the regulations while saving the life of Miss Aline Challenor. He applies to Nathan and Co., of Fenchurch Street, for the vacant command of the ocean yacht, *Queen of Night*.

CHAPTER II.

A New Berth.

Resenting the Jew's intrusive familiarity, I shook his hand off smartly. "The notice is all right," I began, "but I don't quite see ——"

"What bithneth it is of mine," he interrupted, with a chuckle that was meant to be conciliatory. "Quite right, my dear sir; how should you see it? But perhaps you will understand better when you hear that I am Lemuel Nathan, of 315, Harp Alley, and the author of that little invitation. May I ask if it has any special interest for you?"

The fact of his being "Nathan and Co." certainly furnished a sufficient excuse for his having addressed me, for my clothes would have shown him that I was a ship's officer, and he might therefore have supposed me to be a possible applicant. Moreover, I had now had time to perceive in the written notice what I had missed in the newspaper advertisements—a chance of getting good employment, and I hastened to make amends for my curtness.

"Of course, that gives you every right to inquire," I said. "Yes, I hadn't had time to make up my mind when you spoke, but I think I was about forming the intention to come and see you about it."

"And so you shall, my dear young friend; you shall come over to my little offish at once," he replied. "It is close by, and we can talk in my private room more quietly than in a restaurant. Come, shall we strike while the iron is hot?"

He had taken instant advantage of my change of tone to slip his hand back to my coat-sleeve, and he was clutching it as if skippers for pleasure cruisers were so scarce that he was afraid of losing a valuable capture. His attitude, and the wheedling expression he tried to impart to his cunning old face were so ludicrous that I laughed as I said:

"Certainly, I will come—at once, if you like. I am probably a good bit more anxious to see if the billet will suit than you are, Mr. Nathan."

Still keeping his hand on my arm, he led me into the street, talking all the while, and I could not help thinking of the Jew crimps early in the century, so pleased did he seem with himself for having discovered me. This seemed so strange in face of the fact that trade was dull, and unemployed steamer captains as thick as blackberries, that I ventured to remark upon it as I went along.

"Ah, yes, my son; there are plenty of captains," he chuckled, "but not the right sort for the *Queen of Night*. I can read faces, and you are the only man I have seen in a fortnight likely to fill the bill. We want one with a dash and a style about him, to make the ship a little paradithe to the pathengers."

"You would have had more to choose from if you had advertised instead of sticking up a notice which only a few will see," I said.

"That is so my friend, but there are reasons," he replied. "The *Queen of Night* is now become very popular, and her late captain was a favourite. It might affect receipts if it were known that there had been a change."

We had now turned out of Fenchurch Street into a narrow thoroughfare with gloomy old-fashioned houses on either side—once the abodes of thriving citizens, but now let out in suites of offices from cellar to garret. Half-way down the alley my conductor stopped at a door on which among several others was fixed a brass plate bearing the inscription:

Ocean Steam-Yacht *Queen of Night*.
Nathan and Co., Agents.
(And at 420, Pall Mall.)

"This is only where the management of the ship is carried on; the passenger-booking is done at the West-end branch," Mr. Nathan explained, as he dived into the dark, musty-smelling entry, and proceeded to lead the way up a worm-eaten oak staircase to the first floor. Producing a key, he unlocked a door on the landing and invited me to enter. The room wherein I found myself was only some fifteen feet square, furnished with an ink-splashed table and three or four common chairs, and it had the appearance of being but an outer office, for there was a second door at the far end, leading, I presume, to an inner room of the same suite. The distempered walls were dirty and quite bare, except where a few tattered maps and charts were hanging.

He led me into the street.

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My new acquaintance set a chair for me, and seating himself at the table, took a sheet of paper on which he jotted down notes of the answers I gave to his questions. My name, and the dates of my master's certificate and previous employments were duly recorded, and then he asked me why I left the service of the Flower Line.

"Because I broke a rule—left the bridge without being relieved," I replied, not caring to go into particulars unless he pressed for them. Somehow, I was averse from mixing up Aline in such a sordid matter as my discharge. I little knew then how much depended on his ignorance or knowledge of the episode of the rescue.

Invited me to enter.

My answer seemed to satisfy him; at any rate, he showed no curiosity about details. "Breach of regulashuns, eh?" he croaked. "Nothing very serious in that. Can you get me a letter from the company saying that, barring that, you have been an efficient officer and assiduous in your duties?"

I replied that I had no doubt I could. In fact, the directors had told me that they would do all in their power to aid my endeavours to obtain employment by testifying to my general capacity.

"Very well, Captain," he said, "I think it will be all serene, but I must consult with my partners. I am not alone in this business of entertaining the public on the briny waves. Wait here about half an hour, while I run out, and p'raps when I come back I shall have some news for you."

He handed me a *Daily Telegraph* to pass the time, and soon the sound of his shuffling footsteps died away on the stairs, leaving the room very still. You can be sure I didn't trouble that newspaper much. I was far too busy congratulating myself on the sudden turn my affairs seemed to have taken; and, eager as I was to see Aline, I rejoiced that my reluctance to go to her in the character of a cast-off had turned my step eastward in search of work before seeking her. *Now*, if this curious old Jew's "partners" proved complacent, I should be able to go to her full-blown "Captain Forrester," in command of a seven-thousand ton steamer, and with pockets in a fair way to be well lined.

Nothing as yet had been said about rate of pay, but I knew that these pleasure-cruiser people gave good wages. I began to have visions of Sir Simon Crawshay receiving me with open arms and giving his consent to our immediate union; and it was pleasant to think that indirectly I owed my promotion to Aline. Truly, I thought, the "little cherub that sits up aloft" had shifted the wind into the right quarter for me at last.

Thus busy was I with pleasant anticipations, when the sound of a slight cough caused me to start and look towards the door which Mr. Nathan had only partially closed. Standing there, half inside the room, a man was regarding me with an amused expression in a pair of the shrewdest eyes I have seen. He was spare of build, with close-cropped hair turning to iron-grey; but for all his slightness and years he gave me the impression that he would be an ugly customer if called on to take care of himself. His frame was wiry, and the hand that held open the door looked as hard as steel. There was something about the man to inspire trust and reliance even before he opened his mouth.

"Are you in charge of this office?" he asked when he had attracted my attention. He had a scarcely perceptible American accent, which would have escaped general notice.

I explained that I held no position there, but that Mr. Nathan, for whom I was myself waiting, would shortly return.

"Ah, it is not important," he said, coming a few paces into the room. "I was under the impression that the *Queen of Night* offices were in the West-end, and chancing to see the name on the door here as I passed, I thought I would get to the bottom of my error."

"You made no error; they have a branch in Pall Mall for booking purposes," I said. "This is where they do the victualling, buying stores, engaging officers, and all that sort of thing."

"I see; well, as my business, if any, has to do with the booking department, it is of no use to wait here," he said carelessly. "I haven't decided yet, but it's on the cards I may take a trip in this boat. I've just finished a big bit of work, and I am over here to recreate."

"You hail from the States?" I said.

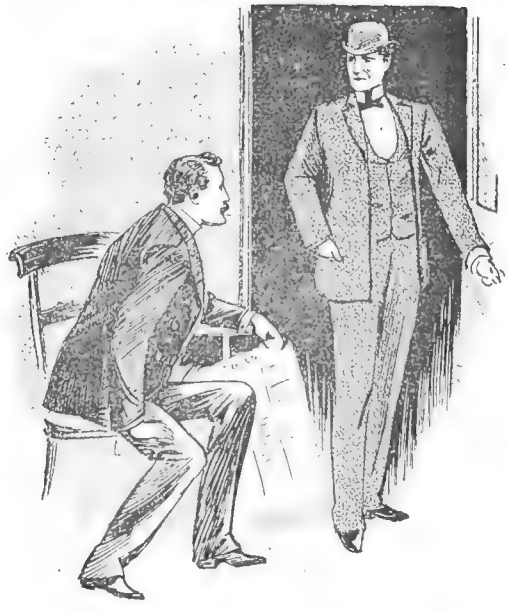
"So you've spotted the twang," he laughed pleasantly. "That is a sad blow, for I rather pride myself on not being branded too visibly with the Yankee trade mark. But then you have had a good deal of experience of Americans I should surmise, if you'll allow me to draw a deduction from your attire. Been in an Atlantic liner, eh?"

"I served in the Cunard some years ago," I said. Then, fearing that I had been rude, I added: "There is very little twang about a Southerner, and I should take you for one."

"Yes, I am from the Southern States," he replied. "My name is Kennard—Franklin Kennard. Possibly you have heard of it?"

I was obliged to confess that I had not.

"Oh, your knowledge of America and the Americans is



"Are you in charge of this office?" he asked.

not very deep-rooted after all," he said, with a curious smile. "Am I right in supposing that you are an officer of the *Queen of Night?* I ask because in that case we may have the pleasure of improving our acquaintance."

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"Not at present, though I may be. I am a candidate for the command of the vessel, and hope to get it," I replied.

"Well, then, good luck to you, and *au revoir*," he said, nodding farewell. "If I decide on the trip I will book at the West-end office, and shall hope to meet you on board."

He went out, leaving the door as he had found it—shut to, but not fastened—and the next moment I heard his footsteps briskly descending the stairs. He must have got

"I've got you covered; if you touch me I shoot."

some way down, to a place where there was a turn, when there reached me in quick succession a hurried cry of surprise, a smothered oath, and the unmistakable clicking sound that is made by the cocking of a pistol. The footsteps had ceased suddenly, and then a voice which I did not know said: "I've got you covered; if you touch me I shoot." To this there came the prompt answer in the cool tones of the American's voice: "You are alarming yourself needlessly; I am not concerned with you—at present."

There followed silence for the space of thirty seconds, and then the footsteps went on again, only multiplied now by others ascending, while those going down, presumably those of the American, grew fainter and fainter, and finally died away. The episode had all passed so quickly that I had had no time for interference, or even to decide whether I ought to interfere; but now that it was over I was seized with curiosity as to the other party to that strange meeting on the stairs. It was not Nathan, for I should have recognised the voice. Was Kennard's interlocutor bound for the office in which I was seated, I wondered, or for one of the other suites on that or the higher floors.

I was not kept long in doubt. The footsteps passed by the door and came to an end further along the landing. I had started forward in my chair ready for emergencies, but finding that the gentleman who was so handy with his pistol was not coming my way I settled down again to wait for Nathan's return. Five minutes passed, and I was beginning to be impatient, when suddenly I experienced the sensation that some unseen person was watching me. Without vanity I may safely say that I do not know what "nerves" are, and I certainly was not alarmed by the feeling; but there it was all the same—the feeling that I was an object of interest to human eyes.

I got up and opened the door wide, but there was no one to be seen on the landing. Coming back into the room I saw that it was clearly impossible for anyone to have been looking at me through the window, which opened with a clear drop of twenty feet into the court below. The office itself obviously had no other tenant than myself. The instinct, however, remained strong upon me, and I gazed round the room vaguely in quest of its origin, till some strange attraction drew my eyes to a map that was hanging on the wall between the office and the inner room.

In the map I found, or thought I had found, the cause. Regarding me with a stony glare from two slits in the coloured portion of the canvas, I seemed to see a pair of steel-blue eyes which, as they met mine, were instantly withdrawn. I sprang forward and examined the map, which was a large scale one of Southern Europe. There were the slits right enough—fair and square in the middle of the Black Sea—but there were no eyes, and no place where they could have been. I poked my finger through the slits and came in contact with nothing but the plastered wall, which was smooth and solid, and apparently without a break.

I was about to lift the map to explore further, when my attention was arrested by the voice of Mr. Nathan from the doorway.

"Ah, Captain," he said, with the throaty chuckle that was one of his peculiarities, as he came in and seated himself at his desk: "Can't you keep from hankering after the tools of your trade, eh? Well, I think that you may take it as settled that you have the ship—provided the Flower people speak for you. If you'll call here to-morrow morning at ten I'll have the appointment all ship-shape and in order, and you won't have cause to quarrel with our terms."

My good luck drove all thought of those peeping eyes from my head, and I had already begun to believe myself mistaken. Away, too, flew all remembrance for the time of the American, Kennard; all that my mind was capable of holding just then was an intense desire to get away to the West-end so that Aline could share my joy. So profuse was I in my acknowledgments that the little Jew shook his yellow wrinkled hand at me in a sort of fantastic deprecation.

"Keep your pretty speeches for the pathengers, my boy," he wheezed. "We want all our stock of sweets for the pathengers of the *Queen of Night*." And he rolled about and laughed as though at some huge joke visible only to himself.

I sprang forward and examined the map.

CHAPTER III.

Sir Simon's News.

On leaving Mr. Nathan's office in Harp Alley I went straight back to the more palatial domicile of the Flower Line, in Leadenhall Street, and had a brief but satisfactory interview with the General Manager. Instructions had been given by the board that I was to be treated liberally in the matter of references, and when I left I was in possession of a letter which vouched for my competency in such glowing terms that I put away all

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further doubt about getting the berth. I was as good as captain of the *Queen of Night*.

Passing out into the street through the great swing-doors, I felt, in homely phrase, as though I trod on air; but as I was looking around for a smart hansom to take me westward, a trivial incident—at least, I thought it trivial then—served to bring me down to earth. Two well-dressed men were standing on the kerb some few paces away, and one of them—the shorter—turned and looked at me. I instantly experienced the same kind of sensation that I had felt in Nathan's office, and, strangely enough, I saw that the man's eyes were the exact counterpart of those which I had seen, or thought I had seen, gazing at me from the slit in the map. Their owner looked away again immediately, and, hooking his arm in that of his tall companion, walked away towards Cornhill.

Walked away towards Cornhill.

In another minute I was bowling along in a hansom in the same direction, and soon passed the pair strolling leisurely, and engaged in earnest conversation. If there had been any budding idea in my mind of a real connection between the incident at Nathan's and the incident in the street, it was quickly dismissed by the men's demeanour. They evinced no interest in surroundings, and, on looking back after the cab had passed, I saw that, even if the eyes had been identical, they were not sufficiently interested in me to follow. The two gentlemen were continuing their walk, and, as I looked, turned into a well-known bank.

"I am a bit jumpy to-day," I said to myself. "If I didn't know to the contrary I should think I had taken the proverbial drop too much last night. The interview with those board-room bogies and the process of getting the sack must have upset me more than I thought."

Pulling myself together, I once more dismissed the incident of the eyes as too ridiculous for serious consideration. As the cab sped along the Embankment I gave myself up to pleasant anticipations of the coming meeting, and by the time it drew up in Grosvenor Square I had forgotten everything but Aline—Aline, the sweetheart whom I had wrested from the sea. But when I had paid my fare and stood before the house my spirits received something of a damper, and I realised for the first time that even unprejudiced persons might see presumption, or what was worse, self-interest, in my courtship. That stately mansion, with its lordly frontage and imposing air of wealth, was hardly the sort of abode in which merchant captains were wont to woo their brides.

However, "faint heart ne'er won fair lady," and I wasn't going to turn tail and run away from brown stucco and grand brass door fittings. I mounted the steps and rang the bell, hardly decided till the door was opened and a pompous butler stood before me whether to ask for Aline or her guardian. Then I went full steam ahead, and inquired plump and straight whether Miss Challenor was at home.

The reply was a disappointment: "Miss Challenor is at Brighton, sir, and does not return till early next week. After that, I believe, she goes abroad for some time."

"Is Sir Simon in?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, will you please to step this way."

He showed me into a small room on the ground floor, and went to take my card to the baronet. While he was gone I tried to come to a conclusion as to what I should do, and I decided to be guided by circumstances. If Sir Simon was friendly I would broach the subject of my love for Aline; if the reverse, I would wait and consult with Aline herself before taking a course which would compromise her and cause unpleasantness between her and her guardian.

The butler had not closed the door, and from where I stood I could see part of the hall and the foot of the grand staircase. In about two minutes I heard people coming down the stairs, and soon the butler came into view, apparently escorting some previous caller whom he was about to show to the front door at the conclusion of a visit. I was so placed that I could only see passers-by as they traversed the last two steps of the stairs, and the butler was out of my vision in a second. Without feeling any special interest in the visitor—except that I suppose in a vague sort of way a lover's jealousy made me curious about *all* visitors to that house—I waited for him to go by. There must have been an interval of half-a-dozen steps between the two, for the second descender of the stairs came with the shambling gait of age, and when he did appear was longer in my sight than the manservant. Hence there was no shadow of doubt this time as to the reality of the coincidence that startled me.

Sir Simon's visitor was none other than Nathan, the Jew owner of the "Queen of Night," my new employer.

I hurried to the room door and looked after the retreating figure as it passed out of the house. He had his back to me now, but what I saw only confirmed my recognition of the leering, wizened face. He wore on his head a regular three-decker of a top hat—a piece of head-gear which, from the peculiarity of its construction, had specially attracted my attention in the city.

There was no time for conjecture or surmise as to the nature of his business with Sir Simon. The butler approached me with a request to follow him to his master's presence, and, leading me up the broad staircase, he ushered me into a snug apartment, half smoking-room and half library.

Sir Simon was sitting at an escritoire, occupied in blotting a counterfoil in his cheque-book, which, upon my entrance,

Sir Simon's visitor was none other than Nathan.

he folded up and thrust into a drawer. The next moment he had risen, and was greeting me, to my surprise, as warmly as was possible to one of his aristocratic temperament.

"Quite a pleasure, I am sure, Mr. Forrest—or Forrester, was it?" he said, shaking me by the hand, and showing his false teeth in one of his made-to-order smiles. "Sit down and take one of these cigars. Have you been fishing any more young ladies out of the sea lately?"

I responded as well as I could to his intended civility, and

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then asked after Aline's health without telling him that I knew of her absence from town. As there was no chance of my seeing her then he might as well take my visit as meant for himself, I thought.

"My poor ward is very far from well, I regret to say," was the disquieting reply that set my heart beating. "She has never really got over the shock of her sudden immersion.

"She has promised to be my wife."

I have sent her down to Brighton in the hope that the change might benefit her, but it has had the contrary effect. My sister, Mrs. Beauchamp, who is with her, reports that she is in a very low state indeed."

This was grievous news, and I was at a loss to understand it. Though Aline had lost consciousness in the water, she was to all appearances perfectly well the next day, and during the remainder of her stay on the *Dahlia* she had continued the picture of radiant health. I expressed my deep concern, and asked for her Brighton address so that I might run down and pay my respects in person.

The request was no sooner made than I perceived the real reason of the baronet's affability in his knowledge that Aline was inaccessible to me. He promptly refused to give the address, and there was an ugly sneer in his tone as he did so.

"That, I fear, is quite out of the question, seeing that you are the very last person she ought to see," he said. "Why, the sight of you would recall the occurrence which is the cause of her nervous prostration, and which it is desirable that she should forget."

"She won't do that," I answered sharply, for his latest demeanour nettled me. "And look here, Sir Simon," I added, stung to a premature declaration by the evil smile with which he received my answer, "I can give you a very good reason why Miss Challoner will not be so forgetful. You may as well know it first as last; she has promised to be my wife."

I believe, and always shall believe, that this was the first intimation he had had that there was anything between Aline and myself, though others think that he had suspected it, and had adopted the measures presently to be disclosed because of that suspicion. From his point of view there was cause enough without that, and at least his manner was that of a man completely taken by surprise. Sir Simon Crawshay was as wicked a scoundrel as any who will appear in these pages, but he had not the professional subtlety of some whom we are about to meet. He started forward, flushing deeply, then sank back in his chair, laughing outright.

"My dear sir," he sniggered at length, "it is a pity you are not in the Royal Navy instead of in the Merchant Service. You would be just the man to lead forlorn hopes and cutting-out expeditions. Do you know that my ward is an heiress, entitled to something like a quarter of a million on attaining her majority?"

I confess I was staggered, but I replied boldly: "I did not know it. If I had been aware of Miss Challenor's great fortune I should never have courted her. As it is, the knowledge comes too late to make any difference, for we have plighted our troth."

"And you are willing to take the quarter of a million thrown in, just as a trifling extra detail," he sneered, implying that I knew of Aline's wealth all along. "Come, Mr. Forrester, you must see that I can never give my consent to such an engagement. I should fail in my duty as Miss Challenor's guardian if I listened for one moment to your proposal. I——"

"Wait a minute," I interrupted; "I have had promotion since we met on the *Dahlia*. I am now captain, and——"

"It makes no difference; pray spare me the interesting particulars," he interposed in turn. "No promotion in your rather obscure branch of a precarious profession would entitle you to aspire to my ward's hand. When do you go to sea again?"

Wondering at the abrupt question, I named the 15th of the month, which was the day Nathan had mentioned as the probable date of sailing.

"The 15th," he repeated, "Well, then, there'll be no harm in my telling you Miss Challenor's future movements; it may save you a lot of trouble in hanging about here. She remains at Brighton till the 14th, and on the following day—the date of your sailing, remember—she leaves England for six weeks. There can thus be no chance of your meeting, although you may perhaps see her through a telescope as you go down Channel. On the 15th my ward starts on a pleasure cruise for the benefit of her health, in the ocean yacht *Queen of Night*."

(To be continued.)

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Rev. F. L. M. Anderson writes: "The enlargements arrived quite safely. We are very pleased with them indeed. Two professionals have seen them, and think them first-class."

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"Seamount," Preston Road, Brighton, *Feb. 19th*, 1895.
"Colonel Alexander received the two enlargements this morning, and is very much pleased with them, and considers both excellent likenesses."

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Thomas Belk, Esq., Solicitor, Middlesborough, writes: "I duly received the enlargements ordered from you, and am much pleased with the result. I also received the originals in perfect order."

"DESERVING OF THE HIGHEST PRAISE."

Jan. 17th, 1895.
Viscountess Southwell has safely received the enlargements, which are most satisfactory, and all who have seen them are highly pleased with them. The likeness has been carefully preserved, and the entire finish and work is deserving of the highest praise.—Rostrevor House, Ramsgate.

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